

The Bird Flu – Chapter 1

I was sitting at my computer in my usual attire, a bathrobe and slippers, watching the Military Channel. The Screen blinked and Time Warner brought up the EAS screen. Dammit, I wanted to hear what the soldier in Baghdad was saying on My War Diary. Two tests in two days? Except the screen usually said that it was a test of the EAS; this one said stay tuned for an announcement from the White House. Crap. I reached over and pulled open the drawer holding my cigarettes, 6½ cartons, good. We'd just finished filling the gas cans the day before and I run the generator to exercise it. There were 7 gallons, less a pint, in the tank and another 70 gallons in 5-gallon gas cans, about 154 hours of run time.

They'd killed a large flock of turkeys in the UK the day before because they had the H5N1 virus. We'd had another helicopter shot down in Iraq and Israel was building up to invade Gaza. When I'd checked the news and the papers earlier that morning, there wasn't anything worth noting. Bush came on TV looking disheveled. Did I miss something? Had someone flown a plane into another building or what?

On 9/11, I took what cash we had and went to the grocery store, loading up on a few things to get us past the attack on the WTC. That was then and this was now, I don't drive now. We were in good shape as far as food went, enough for 90 days. If the power went out, we'd definitely be in trouble, especially if it didn't come back on within a week. I had a MasterCard that I saved for just such an event; it had a full credit limit available. It seems impossible that a gallon of gasoline, which weighs about 6.3 pounds, could produce 20 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) when burned. However, most of the weight of the CO₂ doesn't come from the gasoline itself, but the oxygen in the air.

That means that a 5-gallon can of gas weighs about 31.5 pounds not counting the weight of the can, so call it 32 pounds per can. That's important when you're 63 and disabled. Here comes the Prez, I wonder what's on his mind?

My fellow Americans,

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has indicated that the H5N1 virus has been detected in a flock of chickens in Georgia and in several people. Effective immediately, the following steps will be implemented:

1. Isolation and treatment, as appropriate, with influenza antiviral medications of all persons with confirmed or probable pandemic influenza. Isolation may occur in the home or healthcare setting, depending on the severity of an individual's illness and /or the current capacity of the healthcare infrastructure.

2. Voluntary home quarantine of members of households with confirmed or probable influenza cases and consideration of combining this intervention with the prophylactic use of antiviral medications, providing sufficient quantities of effective medications exist and that a feasible means of distributing them is in place.

3. Dismissal of students from school including public and private schools as well as colleges and universities and school-based activities and closure of childcare programs, coupled with protecting children and teenagers through social distancing in the community to achieve reductions of out-of-school social contacts and community mixing.

4. Use of social distancing measures to reduce contact between adults in the community and workplace, including, for example, cancellation of large public gatherings and alteration of workplace environments and schedules to decrease social density and preserve a healthy workplace to the greatest extent possible without disrupting essential services. Enable institution of workplace leave policies that align incentives and facilitate adherence with the non-pharmaceutical interventions outlined above.

We recommend that you remain at home, except in the case of an emergency. National Guard units will be activated throughout the country to supply food to those in need. Effective 6pm EDT, all air traffic will be grounded.

God Bless America.

"Sharon, we need to go to the store."

"What do we need?"

"More food, gas cans and gas. It sounds like the outbreak of a Pandemic."

"But we have enough food for about 3 months."

"Dubya didn't say how long it would last, but they're letting schools out and asking everyone to stay home. You didn't get the stuff on my list, did you?"

"I was waiting to see how much money we got from Iowa this month."

"We need to go to Sam's Club and Costco and stock up. That's why I gave you that list 2 months ago, so we wouldn't have to go out if something happened."

"How are we going to pay for it?"

"Put it on the MasterCard."

"Costco only takes American Express."

"But, you buy the case lots of veggies from Costco, don't you?"

"That's what I told you, yes."

"Do we have enough money to get just the veggies?"

"I suppose we do, why?"

"I want to get 3 more cases each of the veggies from Costco. We'll buy the other stuff at Sam's Club and use the MasterCard. I'd like to get another 14 gas cans if we can find them. If people get sick, we could lose power eventually."

"You want a six month supply of food?"

"When we had the Spanish Flu Pandemic in 1918-19, in the US, about 28% of the population suffered, and 500,000 to 675,000 died. If that's the case, as many as 90 million people could be involved."

"How do you figure?"

"30% of 300 million."

"I don't want you loading up on beans and rice."

"Only a little. We'd better go by Smart and Final and get more Kidney Beans, too."

On our trip, we bought 14 cartons of cigarettes, 12 pounds of butter, 3 cases each of veggies, 42 cans of coffee, 6 boxes of Velveeta, 30 boxes of Macaroni and Cheese, 16 pounds of macaroni, 100 pounds of flour, 25 pounds of sugar, 24 cans of Spam, 24 cans of tuna, 24 chickens, 60 pounds of potatoes, 25 pounds of beans, 50 pounds of rice, 10 pounds of kidney beans, 2 bottles each of onion flakes and chili powder plus 50 pounds of ground beef. Oh yeah and 6 bundles of toilet paper and several boxes of N-95 masks. We got 14 gas cans at Wal-Mart and filled them at Von's. When we got home, I added 2 teaspoons of PRI-G to each can of gas.

It occurred to me that there was something familiar about those 4 steps Dubya outlined, so I checked my computer. I found it; it was the steps outlined in Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States that I'd downloaded from the CDC.

"Happy birthday, dear."

"Is it Friday already?"

"Do you want a devil's food cake?"

"Yes, please, with coffee frosting."

"Oh, I already frosted it with cream cheese frosting."

"Then, why did you ask?"

"Do we want David and Lorrie to come?"

"Tell her to stay home with the door locked. He said it was a quarantine, which means stay home."

"But we went to the store."

"That was the last trip until I run out of cigarettes. We've got 6 months of food and 147-gallons of gas. With luck we'll be able to go out within 20 weeks when I run out of smokes."

"How long will 20 cartons last you?"

"If I'm careful, 20 weeks. I guess I should lock the file cabinet to keep Amy from smoking them."

"I got her 6 cartons, she'll have to make do. Where did they find the flu?"

"Somewhere in Georgia."

I'd have to cut back on my smoking if those smokes were going to last, lately I'd been smoking 2 packs a day. I told you I was 63, make that 64, doesn't time fly when you're not having fun? Speaking of which, I should have stopped by High Desert Storm and gotten a box of .32 ammo. I had 2,880 rounds of .308, 18 rounds loaded into 17 of the 20 20-round magazines I have plus 9 in the 10-round magazine. I could have bought more, Aim Surplus got more of the SA in but they doubled the price.

"Hey kid. Did you hear Dubya announcement?"

"Hi Dad, what do you make of that?"

"Let me ask you some questions, first. Did you get your rifle out of the hock shop?"

"Last week. We've finished moving to Flippin as of yesterday."

"Do you have ammo for the rifle? How are you fixed on food? How much cash do you have?"

"We have 2 boxes of 9mm and 4 boxes of .30-30. We need to go grocery shopping and we have the cash to do that, why?"

"You'd better get more rifle ammo and enough food so you and your family can stay quarantined until this is over. Since you live where you work and there are 32 apartments in the complex, you'd better get some of those N-95 masks. If Damon shows up,

you'd better plan on quarantining him until you're sure he doesn't have the flu. I'd also suggest you get a camp stove and several cans of fuel in case you lose power."

"Slow down, Dad, I can't keep up with you."

"Sorry. Anyway, this could get bad. It will take them up to 6 months to have a vaccine, assuming the H5N1 doesn't mutate again. Sharon and I went shopping as soon as the broadcast was over and we're good for a minimum of 90 days on everything and 6 months on food and medicine. If you're short of cash and have a credit card with some room, use that."

"I'll probably get activated, Dad, but, we'll do what you suggest immediately."

"Good boy. You call if something comes up, providing the phones don't go down. I've got to call your brother, so I don't have time to visit."

"Did you get gas for your generator?"

"We have about 147-gallons. Won't be enough to run the genset full time, but I think we can get by. Thing is, if the power goes out, the stations won't be able to pump gas and I don't want to break quarantine."

"I thought you were going to get a few 55-gallon drums."

"The city won't let you store drums of gas. I only plan to power the refrigerators and freezer if we lose power."

"I'll call Damon for you, Dad, and lay out the rules if he comes here."

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Sharon was on the house line talking to Shirley in Des Moines. I used the fax/DSL line to call Derek. Amy came home early from work and had helped Lorrie get some food. Her employer told her he'd call when it was safe to come back to work. She had Audrey and Udell with her and they were eating happy meals. Obviously we'd all assumed that the flu hadn't made it from Georgia to California. We were wrong, an early morning flight from Georgia had already arrived and a second was arriving shortly.

"Please stay tuned for an announcement from the Governor."

My fellow Californians,

I have ordered that any flight arriving from Georgia be refueled and order to depart our air space. Both the California National Guard and State Defense Force have been activated.

Effective immediately, all California residents are under quarantine and may not leave their homes. The sole exception will be medical emergencies and critical infrastructure jobs. We have a limited supply of Tamiflu (Oseltamivir) and Relenza (Zanamivir), which will be made available on an as needed basis. Test show Relenza is more effective with H5N1. The antiviral drug is Rapiacta/Permaflu (Peramivir) is not available at this time except in emergency cases. To the extent available supplies of Symmetrel (Aman-tadine), Flumadine (Rimantadine) and Arbidol are available they may also be dis-pensed, depending on the circumstances. Military representatives will be allocated to California communities based on population.

I'll be back.

"Huh-doh."

"Hey Gar-Bear, hear the news?"

"Ronald, what's up? Don't tell me you messed up your computer again, I won't come."

"Did you hear the Prez?"

"Yep and we've already have done all our shopping. Thing is, there are a fair number of flights from Atlanta to everywhere, I expect the flu will be spreading. Costco still had generators, you'd better get one while the getting is good, 'cause you can't come to our house."

"That's not why I called."

"Sorry, what's up?"

"How long do think this thing will last?"

"I'm just guessing, but 'til it's over?"

"How long did you plan for?" he asked.

"We have 6 months of food, 147 gallons of gas and 20 cartons of smokes."

"Linda had an Onan residential standby generator installed."

"What size?"

"20kw, natural gas with an automatic standby switch."

"Costco?"

"Yeah."

"Your best bet on smokes is Sam's Club; they don't limit you to 2 cartons. It's a shame you don't have a freezer stocked up."

"She got one."

"No chit, when?"

"When she got the generator. We already went shopping too, I was just wondering if you went."

"Heard from Clarence?"

"Not in ages. You think he's ok?"

"I haven't heard from him either. You do know that it will take them about 6 months to get a vaccine for this, don't you?"

"Is that enough smokes for 6 months?"

"Nope, but I don't know if I can get Sharon to take me out to get more."

"I can take you; I wanted to talk to you in person anyway."

"I know I could probably get by if we went to Sam's club and bought 6 more cartons. Say, I don't suppose you'd lend me a handgun would you?"

"Don't think so, no."

"Could we stop by High Desert Storm on the way home? I need a couple boxes of .32acp."

"I'll be there in 10 minutes."

I know I should have gotten a real handgun, like a M1911. I had just gotten the 590A1 from High Desert the month before and we didn't have the money. I did have a case each of 15 pellet 00 and Brenneke slugs though. Guess I was a month late and several dollars short. Sharon gave me the Iowa checkbook and told me I couldn't write a check for over \$250. Ron pulled up and I bailed out with 2 of the N-95 masks in hand.

"Here, put this on, it never pays to be too careful."

"I changed my mind on the gun, Gar-Bear. I brought you a .357 magnum revolver."

"Oh, thank you. I didn't relish going up against someone with a .32 auto."

"Sam's Club first?"

"I guess. Then we can get some handgun ammo. You said you wanted to talk to me in person, is there a problem?"

"Do you have any Tamiflu?"

"I have 5 cards. However, if we quarantine ourselves, it might not matter. Hey, Sam's Club parking lot is empty."

"They're closed. Want to go to High Desert?"

"I think we should have stopped there first."

There was a sign on the door of High Desert, "No Mask – No Entry."

"Help you?"

"2 boxes of .357 magnum 158gr SJSP, 2 of 158gr SJHP and 2 boxes of .32acp FMJ."

"I have the .357 on sale, \$19.99 a box."

"Just the four boxes of that and 2 of the .32acp 71gr FMJ."

"\$173.12, cash or debit card only, no checks."

"Ron, can you loan me \$75?"

"I guess."

"Ok, put \$100 on the card and I'll pay the rest in cash."

There were very few cars out. Ron and I discussed the Tamiflu and I told him as long as they stayed quarantined, they shouldn't need Tamiflu. He said he had a box of the masks but didn't think they were necessary just yet. The latest thinking on Tamiflu is that it's could be as dangerous as it is redeeming, however, any port in a storm. I told him I felt that if they locked the doors and didn't let anyone in, they should be ok. As I said earlier, we didn't know it, but the flu had already arrived in California on a flight from Atlanta. The problem was in the timing, if the government had made the announcement one day earlier... The flight had dropped off several passengers, picked up some new ones and then made its next leg, to San Francisco. Sharon gave me \$75 to repay Ron and he went home.

"Did you get your cigarettes?"

"Sam's Club was closed. Ron loaned me a .357 magnum and I bought ammo for it and the .32 auto. Is everyone home?"

"Yes, why?"

"I'm locking the door and it's no one in or out from now on, except to the back yard."

"How was Ron?"

"Fine. They already did their shopping, too. They installed a 20kw residential standby generator and put in a freezer so they should be set. He wanted to know if we had any Tamiflu."

"You don't have any, do you?"

"Five cards. Not enough to share with anyone. I'm going to get out of my clothes and back into my bathrobe."

"You'd better plan on staying dressed and on getting dressed every day from now on, Gary. If it turns ugly, you don't want to be in your robe."

"I suppose you're right, Sharon. It shouldn't start right away; I'd imagine that some people are still trying to get home from LA."

"I left a chicken out for supper, would you cut it up?"

After I lacerated the chicken, I unlocked my cabinet and got out the pistol and my Tac-Force chest harness. I put the new handgun ammo on the shelf and loaded the .357 magnum with the box I kept out. Then, I got my Loaded and took it out of the case and put it in the rifle rack. Finally, I loaded the shotgun and put it in the rifle rack. Since we didn't have a lot of guns, I used lag bolts to mount one of those back window rifle racks on the wall above the litter pans in my office.

Next, I opened a battle pack of SA and got out 5 boxes. I topped off the rifle magazines and loaded the 10-round CA legal mag with a round from a partial box. Finally, I loaded the other three magazines. I inserted the 10-rounder in the rifle, putting it into condition 3. The .357 magnum was in a holster so I found a belt and put it on, adding the holster when I did.

"Sharon, do you want the .32 auto?"

"What do I have to do to shoot it?"

"It's double action, so it's ready to go. To make it easier to fire, press down on this lever here and that will cock or uncock it. Don't leave it anywhere the kids can get their hands on it."

"Maybe I'd better not; guns are your thing, not mine."

North of the Sahara only Egypt has had human cases, 19 of them with 11 fatalities.

There have so far been 271 confirmed cases worldwide, 165 of them fatal, the vast majority in Southeast Asia.

Ever since the first human case of H5N1, linked to widespread poultry outbreaks in Vietnam and Thailand, was reported in January 2004, UN health officials have warned the virus could evolve into a human pandemic if it mutates into a form which could transmit easily between people.

The death of the woman in Nigeria added one more case, a fatal case.

That had been last month when the bird flu had been found in a flock of turkeys in the UK. $11/19=.58$ and $166/272=.61$ I guess the average fatality rate was running about 60%, give or take. What would it be in the US if that flu spread from Georgia? Hartsfield - Jackson Atlanta International Airport was probably the busiest airport in the country. Wiki says, it has been the world's busiest airport by passenger traffic and landings and take-offs since 2005. Fifty-seven percent of Hartsfield-Jackson's airport passengers do not stay in Atlanta but go on connection flights elsewhere. Air traffic controllers for tower and ground control operations referring to the letter "D" use the word "Dixie" instead of "Delta" to avoid confusion with Delta Air Lines aircraft.

Once I had all of my chores done, I sat down and turned on Fox News, at least they wouldn't blame Dubya for starting the Pandemic, if we had one. It was Shepard Smith and he had breaking news. In tracking down persons who might have been exposed to the bird flu, CDC discovered that one of those persons had flown to Los Angeles early today.

"Hey Ronald, Gary. We've got trouble partner, were you watching Fox News?"

"What'd they say?"

"Someone exposed to the bird flu flew into LAX this morning from Atlanta."

"Oh, crap."

"What model is this Smith and Wesson you loaned me?"

"I can't remember, but it shoots good. Can't you go on the net and look it up?"

"It probably has the model number on it, but yes, I can go look it up."

"Wait, it's a model 586."

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The S&W model 586 is a 6 shot .357 magnum revolver and runs over \$800 new. Ron never bought new guns but this one was in good shape. The 4" barrel was just right for a quick and easy gun. I wish I had a pair of speed loaders, but that would mean going to The Gun Shop in Lancaster and I wasn't opening the door. This was an interesting situation, it could be as bad as a nuclear war, but we had radio, TV and the internet. I wonder how long that will last. If we're talking 90 million dead possible, I'd guess that means half the population could get sick, 150 million. No wonder Dubya was on TV.

However, this wasn't 1918; it was 2007 with mass media doing a 3-4 year rant about the bird flu already. Anyone who didn't know didn't watch the news on TV or listen to the radio. Up to this point, the virus hadn't mutated and wasn't an airborne virus, or so we thought. We all know how the government is about these things; they're secret until it's almost too late. Sometimes, they get caught by surprise, like on 9/11. Not that they should have been surprised, but they were.

I tried to deduce what I could from yesterday's announcement.

1. They know the bird flu is in the country.
2. They must think/know/assume that it can be transmitted between humans, easily.
3. Therefore the virus has probably mutated into an airborne virus.

Flu viruses tend to afflict people with compromised immune systems, ergo, children and the elderly. However, the 1918 flu didn't care, it attacked everyone. Red and yellow, black and white, young, middle aged or old, it killed. Damn, I should have gotten more bottles of Purell. No worries, we have 2 gallons of Dial anti-bacterial soap. Those N-95 masks are disposable, they're for 1 use. I had long intended to buy 3M gas masks and use a standard NATO 40mm threaded filter. They're rate N-100. Oh, well.

Speculation on the cable news channels was rampant. CNN and MSNBC were highly critical of the Administration, almost as if they had caused it. Oh the other hand, Fox was supportive but their speculation was the worst, especial Shepard Smith. The news was bad but his method of reporting it tended to sensationalize it. They were just now beginning to report the bird flu in humans, in the mutated form. Then he began to speculate about the national stockpile of Tamiflu.

"Hey."

"Hey, yourself butthead. What's up?"

"Do you ever watch Fox News?"

"That and CNN."

"I can't stand Wolf so I won't watch CNN. Shep Smith just said that there were reports of the bird flu in humans in what appears to be a mutated form. He had some undisclosed source at the CDC."

"Was he speculating or is that a fact?"

"Don't know, but it could be true. The main worry about the bird flu was that H5N1 would mutate and become airborne. The big deal is what they said last night about the person from Atlanta who may have been exposed flying into LAX. The incubation period of H5N1 is ~2 days. If anyone out here has been infected, they don't know it."

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Pandemic Planning Assumptions:

1. Susceptibility to the pandemic influenza virus will be universal.
2. Efficient and sustained person-to-person transmission signals an imminent pandemic.
3. The clinical disease attack rate will likely be 30% or higher in the overall population during the pandemic. Illness rates will be highest among school-aged children (about 40%) and decline with age. Among working adults, an average of 20% will become ill during a community outbreak.
 - 3.1. Some persons will become infected but not develop clinically significant symptoms. Asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit infection and develop immunity to subsequent infection.
4. Of those who become ill with influenza, 50% will seek outpatient medical care.
 - 4.1. With the availability of effective antiviral drugs for treatment, this proportion may be higher in the next pandemic.
5. The number of hospitalizations and deaths will depend on the virulence of the pandemic virus. Estimates differ about 10-fold between more and less severe scenarios. Two scenarios are presented based on extrapolation of past pandemic experience. Planning should include the more severe scenario.
 - 5.1. Risk groups for severe and fatal infection cannot be predicted with certainty but are likely to include infants, the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with chronic medical conditions.
6. Rates of absenteeism will depend on the severity of the pandemic.
 - 6.1. In a severe pandemic, absenteeism attributable to illness, the need to care for ill family members, and fear of infection may reach 40% during the peak weeks of a com-

munity outbreak, with lower rates of absenteeism during the weeks before and after the peak.

6.2. Certain public health measures (closing schools, quarantining household contacts of infected individuals) are likely to increase rates of absenteeism.

7. The typical incubation period (interval between infection and onset of symptoms) for influenza is approximately 2 days.

8. Persons who become ill may shed virus and can transmit infection for up to one day before the onset of illness. Viral shedding and the risk of transmission will be greatest during the first 2 days of illness. Children usually shed the greatest amount of virus and therefore are likely to post the greatest risk for transmission.

9. On average, infected persons will transmit infection to approximately two other people.

10. In an affected community, a pandemic outbreak will last about 6 to 8 weeks.

11. Multiple waves (periods during which community outbreaks occur across the country) of illness could occur with each wave lasting 2-3 months. Historically, the largest waves have occurred in the fall and winter, but the seasonality of a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty.

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"You know, partner, I've had a cold since late January, early February. I'd imagine that my immune system is totally compromised. We might be able to spare anywhere from one to three cards of Tamiflu, if push comes to shove. We should have gotten the oral suspension for the kids and they aren't heavy enough to take full doses. Just let me know if someone starts to get sick with the flu and we'll work something out."

"Sure would appreciate it, Gar-Bear. It's nice to have a buddy."

"Just you remember that when we run out of gas for the generator and come to your house."

"Well. Maybe I can help you find more gas."

"The gas is there now, we don't have drums or the money to fill them."

"How much to fill a drum?"

"About \$132. A drum represents 110 hours of run time. I'm not sure where we'd find used clean drums though."

"I can find some and even help you out on the gas, but you'll have to pay me back. How many drums were you thinking of getting?"

"I'm not sure, I thought about getting up to 6 drums and stacking them pyramid fashion. However, I can stand them on end if I can get one of those pumps like they use to pump oil out of drums. You've seen them, they pump about a quart at a time."

"Altogether you're talking how much?"

"6 times \$132 equals \$792 plus the price of the drums and the pump."

"I can let you have up to a grand. You'll have to pay me back as fast as possible."

"We'd need a pickup to haul the drums, can you get one?"

"Yeah, do you have enough PRI-G?"

"I started out with enough for 512 gallons of gas. I ordered 2 more bottles, so I have enough for 1,024 gallons. I've used a little under a pint, I think, you'd better let me check."

"Call me back when you know."

"Bye."

It was easy to calculate, I'd purchased 77 gallons at first, putting ~2 teaspoons in every 5 gallons. That was 30 teaspoons. Then I'd used another 28 teaspoons when I bought the next 14 cans. A pint contains 96 teaspoons. 6 drums of gas would require 6 times 2 times 11 or 132 teaspoons. The first pint contained 38 teaspoons and the second 96, a total of 134. I'd have enough PRI-G in the first two bottles to fill 6 drums and one 5 gallon can. I actually had a little more; I'd used 9.24ml in each 5 gallon can. A pint will stabilize 256 gallons of gas and that works out to 9.24ml per 5 gallons. I'll say approximately because I can't say exactly. I'd have enough PRI-G to refill 9 more drums.

Six drums equals about 660 hours of run time and the original 147 gallons added another 294 hours. The total was 954 hours, 39¾ days of run time not counting the time it took to change the oil, every 100 hours. I'd also need another 12 quarts of oil, Castrol 10w-30. Meanwhile I had to get an extension cord with a 4 prong plug and get someone to help me wire it into the breaker panel. We could run everything except the air conditioning on 7kw because of the 12kw surge capacity of the generator. It was all a guess and would depend on how many lights we didn't use, etc.

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But wait, if we stayed in quarantine, there was no way we'd get the flu, am I making much ado over nothing? On the other hand, the people who had to go to their jobs, the

ones supplying essential services like water, electricity, gas and garbage pickup were out and about. What if they got sick? Maybe they were the ones that the government stockpile of Tamiflu, etc. was for. About the only time we ever lost electricity or TV was when someone hit a pole. In our nearly 20 years of living here, we'd never once not had gas or water. Trash pickup was reasonably dependable and if they missed you, you could call Waste Management and they'd send a truck.

Right in the middle of the last sentence, we lost power, briefly (really). I think I'm thinking about this too much and it's causing me anxiety. Besides, having the kids' home 24/7 is driving me nuts. Time to take the Xanax according to the way the doctor prescribed it, TID. I'll still be anxious, but I won't care.

Ron picked me up in his neighbor's pickup and it already had 6 empty drums. Could it be he'd go to any length to avoid having us move in with him? I see they raised the price of gas at least 15¢. I'd called Chris and he'd let me use his engine hoist, we could get the filled drums off the truck and roll them to the back patio. We could stand them back up, hopefully, and I'd be good to go. I thought the best bet would be to refill the generator from the cans and refill the cans from the drums, if it got to that.

"Where'd you find the drums?"

"Around."

"What did they cost?"

"\$25 each. They were only used once, to transport solvent. Did you figure out how much PRI-G to put in each drum?"

"Yeah, 9.24 ml times 11 equals about 106ml. I'll measure out how much I put in a 5 gallon can 11 times for each drum, which should be close enough."

"This is going to take a while; I suppose we could use 2 pumps."

"You pump and I'll measure. Once all the drums are treated, I'll pump too."

"You're going to get arrested wearing that handgun inside the city limits."

"Speak up, I can't hear you though the mask. Is there any reason you came to Chevron instead of someone who doesn't gouge on the price of gas?"

"Yeah, I read up on PRI-G on the internet, Techron and PRI-G go together well. Techron is a fuel stabilizer so with that PRI-G, your gas will last longer."

"At 15¢ a gallon extra, it should!"

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I'd have to figure a way to shade those drums before it got hot outside. I'd better plan on taking a little gas out of each of the drums, too – to provide expansion room for when it gets hot. The guidelines say to never fill a container more than 95% full, I'll have to remove 3 gallons from each drum.

This isn't as glamorous as I thought a disaster should be, not like it would be if we had a war, the Long Valley Caldera blew up or we had the Big One. It was like back on 9/11, a few minutes of panic/excitement followed by hours of no big deal because it didn't happen here. Not that 9/11 wasn't a big deal, it just didn't happen here. It was early, only day 2. We'd worn those blue dust masks when we went shopping, it was all we had. After buying a few boxes of the N-95 masks, we'd switched. I couldn't find any of the N-100 or P-100 masks, or I'd have bought them.

We stacked the drums just inside the edge of the patio about 12' from the house. I stood there looking and got an idea, use some of those disposable space blankets, shiny side out, to shield the drums, I had about 10 of them, and it could work. When Sharon had replaced her kitchen appliances last year, we kept the refrigerator and stove. The stove was on the patio, plumbed into the gas pipe and powered from an outlet. The old refrigerator from the garage was on the patio too and the kitchen refrigerator had been moved to the garage. I had intended to get a set of jets to convert the stove to propane, but never got the chance. Not that it mattered; I hadn't gotten any propane either.

I decided to get the camp stoves out of the shed but couldn't find them. Sharon said I gave them and the lanterns to Lorrie and David. I thought I loaned the stuff to them and couldn't remember so I took her word for it. The problem with Coleman Lanterns was the fragile mantle. I brought the open jug of kerosene to the house and refilled the lamps and trimmed the wicks.

Ron would have power as long as the gas stayed on. We have power as long as the electricity stayed on and for about ~40 more days, unless we could get more gas. There would be more money in the accounts any day now, but did I want to try and buy more gas? First we had to pay Ron and Linda back and then, we could take the gas money and grocery money and spend it on gas. When Ron gave me the total, we wrote him a check on the Iowa account. I told him I'd let him know when it was good. That would probably be around the 4th of April.

With the chores done, I settled in to watch Fox News. CDC was still trying to track down all the people on the flight from Atlanta. They were spread all over southern California and the Bay area. Early testing of those they'd found disclosed H5N1 virus in their systems. They were being questioned to try and map the people who they might have come in contact with. That's the news; most of the program was speculation by the news analysts and a host of guests. I checked and Glenn Beck wasn't on so I switched to the Military Channel to see if I could learn who won WW II.

They were showing Stalingrad, again, and the History Channel was doing reruns of Modern Marvels. I put it on the National Geographic Channel, where they were rerunning the show about the 5 disasters that could befall the US/world called End Day. I wanted to see the segment on Pandemics:

Increasing talk of an influenza virus spreading in a worldwide pandemic has scientists, policy makers, and citizens on edge. Do we have reason to be concerned? Yes, though perhaps not as much as you might think after watching End Day.

A pandemic occurs when an influenza virus mutates to a strain against which humans have no immunity, and several simultaneous outbreaks occur worldwide. Pandemics seem to defy predictions regarding timing, strains, severity and worldwide impact.

Three pandemics have occurred in the past century, with the worst being the Spanish Flu from 1918 to 1919, which infected over 200 million people and killed an estimated 50 to 100 million worldwide. This same virus would be even more deadly today, with increased population levels and globalized travel networks.

But could a virus kill 200,000 people in less than 24 hours, as in End Day? Not likely. As scientists study past pandemics and more recent epidemics (outbreaks that didn't reach pandemic level), conditions leading to pandemics are becoming more widely recognized and preparation plans are being developed.

Pandemics also emerge in waves. The initial wave, like the one we see in End Day, would be the least deadly, with the spread and resultant illnesses lasting anywhere from 12 to 36 months. Industrialized nations like the United States would suffer the least due to the accessibility to health care and rapid production of vaccines.

The World Health Organization estimates that the next pandemic will kill anywhere from 280,000 to 650,000 people living in industrialized nations. The Center for Disease Control estimates that in a "medium-level pandemic," 207,000 Americans will die, and 2 to 7.4 million people worldwide will perish.

A highly improbable worst-case scenario, in which vaccines are not developed rapidly enough and the disease mutates to become spread by human-to-human contact, could result in fatalities soaring as high as 16 million in the US alone.

Nations, organizations and scientists including the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control have Pandemic Preparedness Plans in place, are continually researching viral mutations, vaccines and methods in assisting developing countries, and are constantly looking for warning signs to heed the spread of any pandemic that arises in the future.

I wonder if they'll change the show now? After this is all over, they'll have all the empirical evidence they need to make projections from. We're only at the end of day 2, people who have the virus will be over incubation period tomorrow and highly contagious.

That's when the disaster begins in earnest. When the emergency rooms begin to fill up with people spreading the H5N1 to everyone they come in contact with. That's when you know you have the flu, is it when you begin taking Tamiflu?

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On March 28th, my social security hit along with my Iowa pension. Using half of that, I could get 6 more drums of gas or just say forget it. However, we'd already had 2 minor power interruptions, I decided to play it safe and see about getting 6 more drums of gas and a few cans to hold what I siphoned off to make expansion room. I hadn't done that yet because I didn't have any empty cans.

"Hey."

"Hey what?"

"My disability and pension hit so I have a little money. Do you know where we can get 6 more drums?"

"What about the money you owe me?"

"I gave you a check that should be good on April 4th. Anyway, can we get more drums?"

"Yeah, he had at least a dozen left. \$25 apiece."

"If you can take me to the bank, I can get out cash to repay you for the drums and buy the gas. Since I probably can't get any gas cans, I'll need 7 drums. I'll just put 25 gallons in the last one and transfer 2.5 gallons out of all the other drums giving me 13 drums each containing 52.5 gallons?"

"Did you stay up late last night figuring that out? Ok, I'll be there in 30 minutes or less, if I can get the pickup and the drums."

I took \$1,200 out in cash and gave Ron \$175. I decided that he had a point about Chevron gas and told him to go there next. We wanted 355 gallons of gas and the price was up to \$2.499, \$887.15. I went in and gave the guy \$890 because you have to pay first. Then I started to measure out the PRI-G while Ron fidgeted. Once I had it in the first drum, I continued until all seven were set to go, the last one for 25 gallons of gas. I got on the second pump and we bought exactly 355 gallons. I didn't get a lot of change so I grabbed some snacks instead.

"We're closing up at the end of the day and not reopening, I hope you have all the gas you need."

"I don't, but I'm out of money."

"We won't be getting any more gas in until this is over and my tanks are almost empty. Already gave all the help time off. We're you in here before getting 6 drums of gas?"

"Yes. I have a gasoline powered standby generator. If this gets bad enough, we could lose lights."

"Ron, is you tank full?"

"It's not my pickup, Gar-Bear. But if you want to be nice, you can fill his tank, I'm sure he'd appreciate it."

"Think \$20 is enough?"

"Should be."

After we put \$20 of gas in his tank, we headed home. Using the engine hoist and a chain, we unloaded the drums and rolled them to the patio when we struggled to raise them, leaving room between these 7 and the 6 we put in earlier. I thanked Ronald and took the chain and hoist back to Chris, leaving them in front of his garage door. Then, while it was on my mind, I used a 3 gallon pail and began transferring the gas out of the old drums and new drums until I had 13 drums, each containing 52.5 gallons of stabilized gas. We now had 829.5 gallons of gas, less the amount I'd used when I'd exercised the generator. That was ~1,659 hours of run time, a fraction over 69 days. It also represented 16 oil changes so it was fair to say ~70 days.

It took a fair amount of time because I had to switch the drum pump between drums. Plus I got a little on my clothes and pretty well stunk by the time I was done. I stripped of my outer clothing in the garage and got a shower.

"We're up to about 70 days of run time on the generator, depending on how much power we use."

"I went to Lorrie's while you were out and got the newer of the two camping stoves, just in case. How many cans of Coleman fuel do you have?"

"Six one gallon cans. You don't think we'll lose the gas too, do you?"

"I hope not, if we do, we'll only have cold water. Patti said that Dick had a box of jets left over from when they converted peoples' stoves, hot water heaters and dryers to run on natural gas."

"That's fine, but we don't have any propane."

"Yes, we do. I went to Wal-Mart and traded in the old bottles plus bought 4 more. We have 6 20-pound bottles. Plus, I bought 2 spare regulators so we can power the stove, the dryer and hot water heater once they're converted."

"If you'd have thought to buy clothesline, we could have line dried the clothes."

"I bought 6 hanks."

"I saw one hank on the shelf in the garage, which gives us 700'. If I can get a couple of 2x4's I can rig up something. Did you get clothespins?"

"Yes, I've done this before."

"I don't suppose you got some eyebolts?"

"I got 24 when I got the 2x4s at Lowes."

"Oh, really? And how many 2x4s did you buy?"

"Well, I didn't know how many it would take so I bought 12 12' 2x4s"

"That's more than enough. We can string as many clotheslines as you need. That should preserve more gas for the hot water heater and stove."

"I could have bought more."

"Are they still open?"

"Yes, to anyone wearing a mask."

"I don't suppose they had more masks did they?"

"Yes they did, in sizes for adults and children."

"While you're at it, get me 6 more cartons of cigarettes and maybe 18 more bottles of propane. I can't think of anything else, but I'm sure you can."

"Did you have any money left over from buying gas?"

"Oh, sorry, yes I did. Here. You might want to get 2 10' 4x6s from Lowes while you're at it to use as posts for the clothesline."

"Anything else?"

"You can never have too much toilet paper or too many cartons of cigarettes."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 3

"You want a power cord to connect the generator to the fuse panel?"

"Where did you see those"

"Lowe's."

"Yes, but not over 12' long. It's a 4 prong plug and the cable must be rated at least 30 amps. You'd better let me show you the connector on the generator so you know what to look for."

When she returned, she had more masks, the smokes, toilet paper, more clothesline, 2 4x6s and 18 more bottles of propane but no power cord. I ordered one on the net for about \$89 delivered. The UPS driver could leave it on the front stoop and I'd get it after he left. They said 7-10 days. I got the Reliance 10' cable from electric generators.

While I was still posting the last chapters of *Whetstone* and got involved with discussion about the movie *Freedom to Fascism*. I got called an adjective. That almost sounds better than butthead. I'm 64 years old, let the younger people protest the legality of the income tax; I have too much to lose. Besides doing it in the middle of what could be a pandemic doesn't seem too smart to me. If this turns into a disaster, that means we'll have 3. Maybe the third one will end up like we did in *Whetstone* and the government will get replaced. We must make sure the new one doesn't ratify the income tax.

Anyway, if we lost power before the cable arrived, I could get by with the 4 extension cords we had and power the critical infrastructure, 3 refrigerators and 1 freezer. Once I got the new power cord, I could have it ready to hook into the fuse panel when (if) we lost power. If we didn't, Sharon wouldn't have to go to the gas station for a very long time.

Day four began for me around 11am when I finally got up. Amy had closed my door and kept the kids quiet. I struggled into my moccasins and robe and started with the bathroom followed by a trip to the kitchen to get a cup of coffee followed by a trip back down the hall and sitting down in front of my computer. I decided yesterday to ration my cigarettes, limiting myself to about one pack a day. Actually one every 45 minutes, so it was a little more than a pack a day. It was far less than I had been smoking.

Once I was awake, I went online and started checking my news sources, select networks and a few newspapers. I did them in alphabetical order, starting with ABC and ending with MSNBC. Then, I turned to the papers, skipping those I didn't feel up to reading. It started with the Charles City Press and went to the Washington Times. Finally, I checked AP, Reuters and UPI. The only thing I checked at the Press was the Obituary section, finding out who I knew in Iowa that had died. The big story everywhere was the looming pandemic. So far there had been cases in Georgia and they confirmed they were looking for people in LA and San Francisco. I sent XORUSS an email and

told him if he didn't have Tamiflu, he'd better get some. His reply said he had some doctor samples plus a few cards.

I had also explained we'd loaded up on gas and Ron had lent me a .357 magnum. I think Russ misunderstood, he said he bought you a .357? I had said, he brought me a .357. If Ron gave me the .357, I sure wouldn't object, though. A .357 magnum has about the same amount of energy as a .45ACP. With SJHP bullets, the energy gets transferred to whomever you shoot, so I'll speculate it has close to the same stopping power.

Next, I got a shower and dressed, Sharon insisted I get dressed every day from now on. Chance may favor the prepared mind, but what are the actual odds anyone will come here looking for anything? I'd have to be careful to not start believing some of the stories I wrote about survival in the Moon Shadows housing tract. Unless we lost power; if that happened all bets were off. That would only happen if the flu spread and people couldn't get to work and keep the utilities up.

What I failed to consider was the neighbors heard me exercise the generator and no doubt saw Ron and I unloading the drums of gas. Those same nosy neighbors probably also saw Sharon and me unloading the car and all the stuff we loaded onto the shelves in the garage. I saw Lance out on his driveway and opened the window and yelled to him. He came over and stood back about 6' even though I had put on a mask.

"You have enough ammo for your .357?"

"I have about a box."

"I got some on sale, need another?"

"If you can spare it. Elvia and I went shopping and I got a generator and plenty of food, but forgot to get more ammo."

"Did you get much gas?"

"I didn't get any, it's a diesel generator."

"Did you get enough fuel?"

"They're supposed to deliver a 1,000 gallon tank today and come by tomorrow and fill it."

"How big is your generator?"

"12kw and it has an automatic transfer switch. I heard your generator running, how big is it?"

"7kw and it runs on gasoline. I ordered a 10' power cord that I can wire into my fuse panel if we lose power."

"Won't that cause a problem if the power comes back on?"

"Oh, I plan to pull the main fuse. There's no way I'm working on a hot panel. There's a switch on the generator to turn the power to the outlet on and off. Technically I could pull the main fuse and wire the pigtail in when it comes and plug it into the generator leaving the switch off. I may just do that if it looks like we may lose power."

"Do you have any extra masks?"

"You need a box? Sure, but they're only 20 to the box. Here's the ammo and the masks," I said sliding them through the loose corner of the screen.

"Did you ever get the M1A you were talking about?"

"Want to see it?"

"May I?"

I got it off the rack and slid it through the screen butt first.

"It's in condition 3, loaded magazine, not cocked and no round in the chamber."

He pulled magazine and set it on the ledge. Then he checked the action insuring it was empty.

"How accurate is it?"

"I put 9 out of 10 rounds in a 10" square metal plate at the range shooting at 100 yards."

"You have enough ammo?"

"I hope so, I have almost 3,000 of South African surplus."

He left the magazine on the ledge and passed the rifle back through the screen, butt first. I made sure the rifle wasn't cocked and inserted the magazine. I put the rifle back in the rack and we visited a few more minutes. I mentioned that I bought Chris 3 radios for his racing team and Lance wondered if we could use them. I said I'd check and let him know.

"Chris, Gary. Are those racing radios in good repair?"

"I put in new batteries this year; they're in great shape, why?"

"I want to borrow 2 of them, one for me and one for Lance. You can see any trouble coming into the housing tract and let us know on channel 1."

"Gee, I don't know."

"Is that a no? If it is, I'll come down and get all 3."

"Can you spare some gas?"

"I can spare 2 cans, will that help?"

"I'll bring down the radios, headsets and chargers and bring back the gas. You can't carry it can you?"

"Not really, no. Do you have masks?"

"No, do we need them?"

"I give you 2 boxes. How are you fixed on food?"

"I don't know, but Patti went shopping and filled her SUV."

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"Here, put a mask on. Are the radios charged or do we need to charge them?"

"You'd better top them off."

"The gas cans are on the patio next to the kitchen slider. You get them and I'll bring the masks down."

"Are all those drums full of gas?"

"52½ gallons each. The gas is all stabilized with PRI-G."

"What's that?"

"A stabilizer, the fuel should keep for at least a year maybe longer. Just keep an eye on the front of the tract and let Lance and I know about anything suspicious at the entrance of the housing tract."

"You're expecting trouble?"

"No, just being cautious. I figured you'd probably be in your garage anyway, fine tuning the car for the upcoming racing season."

"If we have one, you mean."

"That too. Both Lance and I have backup power, but he has more, a larger generator. We have propane now so when Dick has time, ask him if he can give me jets for the stove on the patio and the hot water heater."

"Ok, I'll mention it. He said he'd probably end up living in his camping trailer, it uses propane. He did say that we probably wouldn't lose gas despite the quarantine and that flu going around. He's been listening to what's going on with his ham radio."

"Wal-Mart is open to anyone wearing a mask and they have plenty of those 20 pound propane bottles, filled."

"I'll tell him."

"You need a gun?"

"What can you spare?"

"Not much, just my .32 auto and a couple of boxes of cartridges."

"Better than nothing, I guess."

Chris had the 5kw generator I bought at Harbor Freight tools 10 years ago. It would keep their two refrigerators cold. It might be junk, but it had worked well ever since I'd bought it. He'd mounted it in his truck and it ran off the truck's gas tank.

"You need anything?"

"I could use a handful of those heavy duty cable ties if you can spare them."

"I have the ones you gave me, I'll get you some."

"Tanks."

I got them, took them home and used them to strap together the set of 4 shelves holding our food in the garage. I cinched 'em tight, a just in case measure against earthquakes. Say, maybe things were taking on some of the dimensions of the stories about Moon Shadows after all. If only I'd known... I took Lance a radio, headset and charger. I told him to set the radio to channel one. The radios were VHF business band radios, Radius model 50s. Other than needing to replace the NiCad batteries about every 2 years, they were good radios.

Nothing happened on day 4 except my watching the pandemic beginning to unfold on Fox News. And Arnold was on local TV reinforcing the statewide quarantine. People

were beginning to show up in emergency rooms in LA and San Francisco. All they could do was dispense Tamiflu and send them home. Tamiflu was proving to be less effective against this variety of influenza. The local supplies were beginning to run short as people called their doctors and had them call in prescriptions that people got filled, usually at Wal-Mart or Walgreen's. People were ignoring the quarantine, forcing Arnold to send in the National Guard and state Defense Force.

That included the local Guard unit here in Palmdale who were activated to assist the LA County Sheriff in the Antelope Valley. They had been, repeat had been, issued ammo for their M16s and M9s. Chris called on the radio that he had seen a HMMWV passing the entrance to the housing tract.

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Around 5am on day 5 I was awakened by the closet doors rattling. I didn't feel anything, but got up, dressed and went to my computer to see what that was all about. I also turned on the TV to channel 2, KCBS, LA. Dr. Lucy Jones the Scientist in Charge of the USGS Seismology Laboratory in Pasadena and Dr. Kate Hutton a Technician at the USGS Seismology Laboratory at Caltech in Pasadena were explaining the earthquake measuring a preliminary M_w 7.4 with an epicenter 5 miles NNW of Ocotillo Wells, CA. On February 8th, a smaller M_w 4.3 earthquake occurred near the same epicenter, a possible precursor. I pulled up a map and it was between San Diego and the Salton Sea, a long way south of here.

Amy had an exception and had to go to work to her new job in Lancaster at the Sheriff's station. She had taken a different job in February, but this job paid \$800 a month more. I have no idea what she did and she had told Sharon but not me. One of her perks was to get additional Tamiflu, enough for everyone in her household. That meant I could sell Ronald all five cards of Tamiflu I had. He brought me 2 more drums of gas and I promptly told Chris I had 5 more gallons of gas available if he had a can. I added the PRI-G immediately. That gas increased my run time by an additional ~210 hours. That finished off my supply of PRI-G.

I called West Marine in LA and ordered 4 more pints. She said they had it in stock and I'd have it the next day, FedEx ground. I now had 15 drums each containing 52½ gallons plus 137 gallons of gas in cans or the generator, a total of ~914 gallons giving me ~1,849 hours of runtime, ~77 days. I also had one very happy best buddy.

The flu was now surfacing all over the country, I assumed because people had picked it up at the Atlanta airport and spread it far and wide. Dubya finally got something right but that hadn't stopped the criticism. Moreover, like it or not, this precluded him sending more people to fight in Iraq and he couldn't extend the tours of our troops indefinitely. The war was finally being ended by the bird flu. Fox News said he was sending a 3rd Carrier Strike Group to the Persian Sea. I saw a Chevron delivery truck delivering Lance's diesel fuel and called West Marine back and told her I also need 4 pints of PRI-D. She said she'd have it shipped directly from one of their stores at the Marina and I

have it in 2 days. I called Lance on the radio and told him I ordered him fuel stabilizer. He could pay me for it when it came. Our bank account was getting mighty thin. Chris must have put the gas in his truck tank because he returned the empty gas cans.

One other thing Sharon had picked up at Wal-Mart was more of those florescent light bulbs, which would cut our power consumption significantly. It would be even more important when we were using the generator, if we had to use it. By now I was convinced it was when, not if. Chris had gone to Big Five and bought a Mossberg 500 shotgun, but had to wait 15 days to bring it home. He only bought about 100 rounds of 00 buck.

It now turned out that you could travel on a limited basis if you were wearing a mask rated N-95 or higher and had on exam gloves. To a limited extent, the grocery stores were open (6 hours a day) but all of them were enforcing a 'no mask, no entry' policy. Ron explained when he brought the gas that the Chevron station was open but limiting purchases to 55 gallons. He'd had to go to 2 different stations to fill the drums. He also told me that he planned to buy the remaining 9 drums his neighbor had and would bring them to me when he could fill them, but I'd have to pay him for the drums and gas.

After I called West Marine, I called him and told him I'd ordered more PRI-G and would have enough for another 1,024 gallons of gas. I told him that I also had 2 empty 5 gallon cans we could fill. Once we had all the drums filled, I'd have 1,407 gallons of gas giving me 2,814 hours, 117 days of run time. I would also need another 24 quarts of oil. There was a limit to how many drums you could put on the truck. The last time out, we had it on the springs with the 7 drums containing 355 gallons of gas. The gas alone weighed over a ton.

I intended to go to Lowes and buy 5 more cans to hold the gas I drained from the drums. I'd be in good shape unless the city came by and found me with all those drums of gas. I'd also have to pick up more space blankets and another roll of duct tape, but Sharon could do that when she went to Wal-Mart or Lowes and got the 5 extra cans.

I went out and dug 2 holes in the lawn to put the poles in. I really need an auger to get as deep as I wanted to go, at least 3' and preferably 4'. I have her check at Lowes for an auger. And a long bladed spade. She might just as well pick up some Quikrete and we could cement them in place. It might take as many as 6 bags a hole, I didn't really know. I'd use the same spacing on the posts that the poles supporting the patio cover had, giving me the maximum number of clotheslines. I was figuring on a maximum of 6 lines.

I was thinking manual auger. She came home with a power auger head and a separate 8" auger that dug to a maximum depth of 32" She also had a 24 4x4x8's and told me to start thinking about a fence out front. She also had a 20' gate and a 3' gate and 4 4x6x8' poles being delivered. She had an 80 rod (1,320') roll of barbed wire and a large box of staples. In addition, she had 36 bags of Quikrete. She told me that the Quikrete was for the 4x6s.

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"Hey."

"Hey what butthead."

"I need your help. I need to dig 30 holes using our new power auger and that's a 2 man job."

"What for?"

"Sharon wants me to put in a fence out front. She bought 24 4x4s and 4 4x6s plus a 3' and a 20' gate."

"Say is that check good?"

"It will be on April 4th, I thought I told you that. I'll ask Sharon to check the Iowa account online and call you back."

"Thanks, bye."

"Sharon, would you check the Iowa account, Ron wants to deposit the check?"

"Call him back and tell him it's good and he can deposit it anytime. Did you ask him to help you dig the holes?"

"Yes. He didn't say yes or no, he just asked about the check. I assume if it's good, you can write a check and transfer money to Wells Fargo so we can get cash? He has 9 more gas drums. I owe him \$225 for them. I'll also need enough cash to buy 495 gallons of gas at figure \$2.50 a gallon, About \$1,250 in cash."

"You need it now?"

"The sooner the better, we can only buy 55 gallons of gas at one station, they're limiting purchases at the Chevron stations. We'll have to make 3 trips to the 3 stations in Palmdale."

"I'll get you the cash; you call him back and tell him you will have a good check for \$225 he can deposit with the other check."

"Ron, the check is good now and I have a check for the other 9 drums, \$225."

"I'll pick it up and deposit it and deliver the empty drums. We have to make 3 trips to fill the drums."

"Right, I told Sharon and she's getting the cash."

"I'll help you get the gas but someone else will have to help you drill the holes, ask Chris."

"I'm sure he will; I gave him 3 cans of gas."

"Pay me cash for the 9 other drums if you have enough, I paid you cash for the Tamiflu."

"Can do."

"I'll be over in, say, 45 in minutes; we'll fill 6 fill drums. You put in the stuff in drums while you're waiting."

"Gotcha, you can give me the check for \$225 back."

"Forget the cash, I forgot you gave me a check for the drums. Get busy putting the stuff in the drums."

"Gotcha, 45 minutes."

It took me most of time to treat the drums. Ron didn't show up for almost hour.

When we returned, the 3 empty drums were on already on the drive. We unloaded the filled drums and Chris rolled the drums on the patio. We went after the last 3 drums of gas. As soon as those 3 drums were unloaded, Ron took off. Chris helped me move them to the patio and remove 2½ gallons from each drum into a 5 gallon can. This filled 4 and we had a ½ can left over. I gave it to Chris and he put it in his truck and returned the can.

So much for the quarantine... But I now had 24 drums each holding 52.5 gallons of stabilized gas, 1,260 plus 157 gallons in cans and the generator, 1,407 gallons minus 10 gallons we'd used. Can you imagine what would happen if it caught fire? For what it's worth, I did have 2 10-pound dry chemical fire extinguishers there. When this is all over, I may have to go into the used drum business.

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On Day 6, the cable arrived, UPS Overnight. About noon, the power went down and I took the opportunity to pull the main fuse and wire in the cable. I had just plugged it into the outlet on the generator when Chris walked up and said, "The power is back on." I shut down the generator, put the main fuse back in and we had power. I guess I really should have gotten an automatic transfer switch after all. I still had a fence to put in for the front yard, holes to dig and posts to set and 2 gates to hang.

Because we have a sprinkler system, putting in a fence wasn't as easy as it first appeared. I had to allow a setback so I didn't get the water lines. Then, at certain places, I

put in 4x6s and others, 4x4s. The gate had to swing out because of the slope of the lot plus I had to make sure that the gateposts were properly spaced so the gates would fit.

Amy helped and with much measuring, we determined where to dig the postholes. We started in the backyard so we could get the poles in for the clothesline. Next we started at the fence on the west edge of the lot and worked our way to the sidewalk. Next, we did the first gatepost and very, very carefully measured for the next gatepost. The gateposts would be set in concrete, we couldn't make a mistake.

Then we did the gate posts for the sidewalk and put one post between the driveway and sidewalk gatepost. By the time we had all the holes in, it was getting late. Better we should wait until the next day before we started putting in the gateposts, mixing concrete and so forth. I detached the auger from the engine, cleaned everything up and called it a day. To be honest, it felt more like a week.

After supper, Lance came over and wanted to know what was going on. I told him that day 5 started by getting an additional 9 drums of gas, all stabilized and ready to go. That Sharon wanted a fence and to top it off, the cable to connect my generator to the main service panel came in. Day 6 began when the power went down and I was able to wire the cable into the service panel. Day 6 ended by our laying out the postholes and getting them dug.

The next day, we planned to set the posts that required concrete and get those all properly aligned in the 2 vertical planes so we could mount gates and string wire. There was still the matter of putting in the supporting posts that would be held in place with tamped dirt and stringed barbed wire. Plus, I had to finish getting a clothesline supports fabricated and the rope strung. Unless something untoward happened, it looked like we'd be done by the end of day 8.

He told me that his tank had been delivered and plumbed into his standby generator. That Chevron had delivered the diesel fuel and they'd done a test run. Everything worked. I mentioned that I had PRI-D. I figured it would show up tomorrow and he could add it to his fuel according to the instructions. It would take ½ gallon of PRI-D to stabilize 1,000 gallons of fuel. Ideally, he'd have added it before the fuel went into the tank and it would have mixed in while the tank was filled.

He asked me if I felt the earthquake the day before and I had to admit that I hadn't felt it but it did rattle a closet door a little. It was a long way off anyway, down by Salton Sea. A guy could never be too careful, especially now. What with the hospitals filling up with people who had H5N1, it wasn't a good time to go to the hospital for a broken arm or any other earthquake injury.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 4

Putting in this fence wasn't my idea but it didn't matter because we had the materials and all it need now was elbow grease. Early on day 7, we got the 2 posts for the clothesline set in place an leveled, We even tamped a little dirt in the bottom before we mixed up 3 bags of Quikrete. With one post poured, we used 3 more bags and did the second. Then, we moved to the front yard and set, aligned and braced the gate posts. When they were done, we did the cement, one post at a time. We cleaned up and broke for lunch. After lunch, we put in the remainder of the posts, getting them properly aligned, braced and tamped in place. Either we were slow or it was a lot more work than we thought it was.

Although Quikrete sets fast, it doesn't really cure any faster than regular concrete. This gave us time the following day to put up the 2x4s, drill the holes and add the eyebolts. We used the first board as a template for the second board. When we finished up, the board was mounted between the two patio roof support posts and it was 'good to go'. I wanted to give the concrete until the first of the week before we mounted the board on the 2 posts in the backyard. The boards with the eyebolts went on the backside of the posts and were held in place with a lag screw. We had actually doubled up the 2x4s making laminated 4x4s because of the span involved. We had a line level and could use a tightly stretched piece of rope to make sure the second board was the same distance above the ground as the first board.

We could have started putting in the barbed wire but I wanted to wait until after the gates were hung. They were pipe frame gates with woven wire like Cyclone fence. They wouldn't stop anyone determined but they would slow them down. I figured once everything was back to normal, we could use boards and build a white picket fence after the wire came down. The lumber was pressure treated, it wouldn't rot anytime soon. Made it harder to paint however. Right now, I suppose her main concern was all those drums of gas in the backyard that would be inviting to anyone who knew they were there and a serious fire hazard.

Plus, the garage was filled to nearly running over with food. People had to be aware of our circumstances ever since Dubya got on TV. We weren't the only people that went shopping that day, but were some of the earliest. The same went for Ron and Linda, Lance and Elvia and Chris and Patti. Over the weekend, Dick came down and installed the jets in the outside stove and we checked it out, it ran fine on propane. He also checked the hot water heater and dryer. He said he had jets for both and put them in a Ziploc bag that I could put up until they were needed. If we lost gas, he be down and install them. He said not to try that myself; he needed to make adjustments.

o

A recap of our situation showed that we have food and medicine for 6 months, nearly 1,500 gallons of gasoline for the generator and cars, propane, and a means to protect ourselves. More importantly, we have Tamiflu liquid for the kids and cards of the cap-

sules for the adults. We also added Relenza. In a couple more days, the lot will be totally fenced in and/or gated. There are 2 50 gallon drums of purified drinking water, 50 gallons in the hot water heater and 6 cases of those small bottles of drinking water.

According to the news, the bird flu hasn't reached Pandemic status yet, but it sure could. There has been some violence in the larger cities somehow related to peoples lack of preparations and/or expectations about the flu. I lived through a few flu Pandemics in my life, Asian ('57-'58), Hong Kong ('68-'69) and SARS ('02-'03). None of them came near the '18-'19 Spanish flu Pandemic, but they're classified as Pandemics just the same. I didn't get any of the 3 listed, guess I was lucky. They didn't dismiss school in Charles City, but there were quite a few empty desks for a while. When the Hong Kong flu rolled around, I was in college and newly married.

Something like this gives you a little bit of time to prepare. They'd been talking about bird flu for quite a while now and until very recently, it hadn't mutated to a human flu easily transmitted person to person. I give the government credit, once they knew, they moved fast. Not fast enough it seems, but fast. I'm sure by now that they've isolated it and in 6-8 months' time, we'll have a vaccine. They gone to a new procedure to produce vaccines now and it's much faster. It's not in widespread use yet, but it will be.

You watch those places that sell the N-95 and N-100 masks will run out soon and the pharmacies will soon be out of Tamiflu and Relenza. You'll be able to order it from Canada for a while, but it will go for \$150 a card, maybe more. The going price is actually about \$50 a card. There will be enormous profiteering, despite anything the government does to try and stop it.

It's like anything else, supply and demand. Take ammo for instance. Brass is 90% copper and the price of copper has gone way up. It now cost the government more than 1¢ to make a penny. There a lot of profit to be made when concern arises and people try to stockpile things. Thanks to the UN, that highly affordable SA .308 won't be available because now South Africa has to demil it instead of selling it. When it was cheap, I didn't need any, but as soon as I got a M1A, the price skyrocketed. It's not bad enough we have Democrats trying to disarm us, now the UN is trying to outlaw guns. Their first step has been to eliminate surplus ammo.

I've told you for 50 stories that you should have 5,000 rounds of ammo for your MBR. Who can afford to do that now? You'd better learn to shoot very straight and limit your ammo use, cheap ammo is history. I suspect that Sharon agrees; that's why she bought the barbed wire. It won't stop them, but it sure will slow them down. They might think twice before they try to cut though the wire. If they do, the dogs will go off like a major alarm system; we'll have time to react. If I have to, I can even light it with some of those cheap reflector lamps using those efficient florescent bulbs. I gave most of them to Chris, but I can always get a few back, he won't spend the money for a fence or the electricity to light it.

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The weekend happened and we didn't get the fence in by day 8 like I planned. The concrete is well enough set that early on Monday, Day 10, we got the gates up and started stringing barbed wire. We put in a strand every 10" and still had wire on the spool when we finished. We pulled it as tight as we could, they're short runs and don't appear to be sagging. Both gates will only swing out because of the slope of the lot. Late in the day we even got the clotheslines finished. We have 6 lines 2' apart and 50' long. I came up with a piece of chain and a padlock; I can chain the generator in place.

"Hey uglier than me. We got gas, we got fence and I can power the whole house except for the air conditioner. How are things over there?"

"Partner, if she comes up with one more honey do, I may end up a widower. We have Brenda and her hubby, Kevin and his girlfriend and John. John has been a real help and without him, I think I may have done some killing. As long as we have gas, we're in very good shape. How about you?"

"Dick put propane jets in the stove on the patio and we have 24 20-pound bottles of propane. Did you get your doctor to prescribe Tamiflu? You'd only need one more card plus some of the liquid for Brenda's baby."

"Can't believe it, but he did. They charged me about the same as you did \$50 a card and the same for the bottle for the baby. Where did you get more?"

"Amy is working graveyard at the Lancaster Sheriff's station. She got 3 bottles for the kids and 10 cards for us. That covers Lorrie and David and Jeffery plus the 2 boys still at home. She thinks she might be able to get up to 6 more cards so that will cover Lance and Elvia plus Chris, Patti and Daniel and we will have more than enough for us. There are a few posts left over and a little wire if you need it. You can borrow our powered auger to put in the post holes and I can give you enough posts and what wire we have left."

"Well, both checks cleared and we're squared away on the money. I'll talk to the boss and see if she wants the posts and wire. Say, how much of that PRI stuff do you have?"

"Enough to give you part of a pint. What did you do, get some cans of gas for your car?"

"Yes sir, I did. The part bottle would be more than enough. We have one of those things you used to measure it with, too."

"Come on over and I'll put on a fresh pot of coffee."

"See you in a bit, sure appreciate it. I just need to get out for a while and see an ugly face that isn't asking me to do this and that."

I had found it necessary to ask Ron more than once to do me a favor or provide transportation. I almost felt guilty when he said what he did. So far, the local National Guard and Deputies weren't riding roughshod on anyone wearing a mask. Ron live less than a mile away, it was about a 5 minute trip when traffic was heavy and even shorter when it wasn't. This time he showed up wearing one of his other .357s and had his Su-16 with the high capacity mags and 2 10-round mags.

"Expecting trouble?"

"Man, it's scary out there. There is almost zero traffic."

"Here's the partial bottle of PRI-G, 9.25ml or ~ 2 teaspoons per 5 gallons. Dick said he needed to know the brands and models of your furnace, hot water heater, stove and dryer. What's the matter, Lyn getting a little heavy handed?"

"Most of it is probably anxiety, Gar-Bear – what with being cooped in the house 24/7. Kevin sits on his butt and expects to be waited on. Brenda is usually busy with the baby and so forth. John helps a little, but you how that is."

"Being boarded up at home for an extended period is always hard on a person, Ron. I more or less been stuck here since I gave up my driver's license in 2003. After a while watching TV got to be pretty old and I started writing as an outlet for my extra energy. The upside was it got us more into preparedness. Sharon's motives are completely different from mine, but she's aboard. Truth is, I'm pretty feeble and any amount of work leaves me worn out for several days."

"Nice fence, but it seems out of place in this neighborhood."

"When this is all over, we'll pull the wire, shorten the posts and convert it to a picket fence."

"It almost sounds as if this will be all but over by the time they come up with a vaccine."

"I've often thought the same thing. Implementing quarantines long before the flu spread should prevent millions of cases. When it's all said and done, they'll probably blame the President for jumping the gun. If he's waited any longer, they end up blaming him for not responding fast enough. Man. I'm sleepy, I think I'm going have to go back to bed. I don't get it, I slept late, got up and took my pills and insulin and now I can't keep my eyes open."

"You look like you're half asleep."

"I am. Let me top off our coffee, maybe that will wake me up."

I kept nodding off and finally Ron went home, some of his frustration relieved, but not enough. I went back to bed and slept until 7pm, got up and took my evening meds. Only

then did I discover I'd screwed up and taken my evening meds this morning and morning meds this evening. My evening meds were focused on putting me to sleep, mystery solved. I had just gotten up for the second time, around 7pm, when Ron called.

"Partner, I've got some bad news."

"I just woke up, talk slow."

"We have our first case of bird flu in the Valley. The gal who drives the bus to LAX is sick. Apparently so are some of her passengers."

"But how?"

"One of those passengers was on the flight from Atlanta."

"Are you contagious during the incubation period?"

"I don't know nuttin about stuff like that. That's why I go to doctors. The announcer said, *Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick.* He said the passenger died."

"Died where?"

"AV Hospital. He said there were a whole lot of people getting sick in the Antelope Valley."

"We're on lockdown from here on out, partner. After this is all over, I think I'm going into the used drum business."

"Oh, he'll buy them back."

"How much?"

"\$20 each."

"I might just keep them. I had a dream and in it I dug a trench in the backyard, lined it with pressure treated plywood and put the drums down in the trench. I covered the trench and put in two small fans for circulate the air and get rid of any gas fumes."

"Oh really, what did you use for fans?"

"Those small computer fans that run on 12 volts. I left 2 holes the same size in the other end for the air to escape."

"How did you get the gas out of the drums?"

"Don't know, I woke up."

"That's all I wanted, you can go back to sleep now."

I was fully awake and got the Radius off the charging stand and tried to call Chris and Lance. I didn't get a reply and wasn't going to leave the house, no matter what. I called Chris on the phone and filled him in. Just then I saw Lance and Elvia pull in so I waited a few minutes and called him on the radio, explaining what Ron had told me. Lance told me he had talked to Dave Lucky and they were going to put a fence across the front of their two houses. Could he borrow my posthole digger? I told him I'd call Ron and get it back.

"Hey, did you dig those post holes?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Lance wants to use my posthole auger."

"I'll bring it right over," he said and hung up.

I'm sitting in my wheelchair in front of the office window when he pulls up, toots his horn and sets the auger outside the fence then leaves. What the hell? I'd poured him a cup of coffee and even sweetened it with Sweet and Low. I called Lance back on the radio and told him the posthole digger was right outside the fence, come get it. I waited until he picked it up and then took the coffee I poured for Ron and poured it down the drain. I called Lance back on the radio and told him I had a can of premixed gas/oil and I'd set it outside of the fence. I used PRI-G Small Engine Gas Stabilizer in that can of gas. An 8 ounce bottle of that stuff would only treat 20 gallons of gas.

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The next morning, I was up early, ala 9:30 am. Lance and Dave were making short work of putting in the post holes. They had 2 gates and had to chip holes in the concrete slab to put in the gates posts. Lance must have bought the gates; they were rather fancy, wrought iron. They were setting round steel posts too; it looked to be a permanent installation. They were using more Quikrete than I had used, filling the entire holes with concrete. They had the posts in and cemented in place before noon.

Two days later, a truck pulled up, mounted the gates and installed sections of wrought iron fence in between each of the posts. I'd have let the concrete set longer if it had been me. I did notice that the fence didn't have those pointy things on the top of the rails. It wasn't long before Lance came out of Dave's garage with a box of them which they proceeded to install on top of the rails. I got my binoculars and looked close, they'd been sharpened!

"Lance, this is Gary, come back."

"What's up Gary?"

"Pretty fancy fence. You sharpened those arrows on top?"

"Seemed like the thing to do."

"Someone will probably try to climb your fence, get stabbed and sue you."

"Only if they find the body. Say, I meant to tell you, I bought a rifle like yours."

"When can you pick it up?"

"Private sale, I have it now. It's a Loaded, just like yours and I got 35 magazines for it."

"How much ammo?"

"About five thousand rounds. 4 cases of 1,260 rounds of the South African surplus."

"Don't suppose you'd part with 10 of those magazines would you? I'll give \$15 apiece for them."

"Make it \$20 and you have a deal."

"I'll be right out with \$200 in cash."

When I got back into the house I got out 2 battle packs and loaded those 10 new magazines with 20 rounds each. I now had 410 reasons why someone shouldn't try to come through my fence plus a shotgun and a .357 magnum. I later saw Lance wearing ALICE gear and he had several of those 30 round magazine pouches that will also hold 2 M1A magazines. It's nice to have a former Green Beret officer living across the street.

I wish now I had 2 of the Tac-Force chest harnesses. I came close to buying second, but close only counts in dancing, horseshoes and hand grenades.

The people who should really have a fence are Dick and Chris; they're right at the end of Stardust Place, the street leading into the housing tract. I put on my chest harness, checked the revolver and grabbed my rifle. I walked down to where Chris and Dick were standing, visiting.

"You guys should really think about putting in a fence."

"That's what we were talking about. That and getting Dick a radio on the same frequency as ours."

"They don't make the Radius 50 anymore, but he could buy a CP200. I have a POS posthole digger and if you're just looking to put in a temporary fence, don't cement the holes. You can tamp them down tight and that should work."

"Where did you get the materials for yours?"

"Lowe's."

"It's just the flu; I can't see where we're in any danger."

"If that's the case, why did you borrow the pistol, Chris? One advantage to having a fence is to keep people away from your house. Talk to the guy who lives between the two of you and see if he'll go in with you. That would take less wire and give you a much bigger enclosed area. You can borrow the posthole auger and premixed fuel if you need it."

I guess they decided to put in a more permanent fence, they came back with sections of prefabricated wood fencing, standing upright in the back of Dick's pickup. I got my small cart and put the motor, auger and can of gas on it and wheeled it down to Chris' house. They started immediately to dig the post holes. That didn't take all that long so I sat and watched, it beat TV. Next, they put the posts in and use 1x2s to level them. Finally, they poured the dry Quikrete in the holes and added water. We put my stuff back on my cart and I went home.

It wasn't 3 hours later that they began to add the fence sections. I didn't know the stuff set up that fast. By late in the afternoon, they were ready to hang gates. The fencing was even prestained with a redwood finish. I didn't see any gates, but didn't realize they had spaced the posts so they could use 2 sections of fencing as a gate. The driveway is 16' wide, hence an 8' fence section would do half the driveway. They added brackets to hold a 2x4 and that would keep the gates closed, if necessary. It sort of gave a whole new meaning to 'Katie, bar the door.' I asked and they said the fence sections ran about \$65 apiece. Barbed wire would have been a whole lot cheaper and you could see through it.

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Dick left the next day and came back with a CP200 and a CM300. He had two and they were both programmed for the same frequencies on Chris' radios. The old Radius 50 used crystals and was called a P50. Dick loaned the second handheld to Dave Lucky. The CM300 was mounted in his pickup. He said they had more if I wanted one. I did; in fact, I wanted a CM300 and a couple of the CP200s plus the computer program so I could program the frequencies. I told him I wanted the CM300 as a base station so he'd better tell the guy. Then, I wrote a check leaving the amount blank and told him to be sure and get me an antenna and some coax.

Understand I'm a ham (KD6GDQ) but don't have a 1st class radio license. I rather suspect that you must have a 1st class license to get your hand on the disc, but I don't know that for a fact. The CC&Rs for the housing tract specifically prohibit radio antennas, but no one said anything when I had the big CB antenna up. Dick got that and my tri-bander when I moved out. He put up the tri-bander, but I don't think he ever put up the CB antenna, maybe I should ask.

What I ended up with was a CP200 VHF and a CM300 VHF and a mobile antenna plus a roll of RG8, oh well. But, I did get a copy of the computer program and a cable so we could program the radios. Dick gave me back the 39' mast and it was easy to install because the bracket was still on the patio, as was the ground rod. He helped me reinstall it and raise it. The hole was still in the lid of the office and the RG8 worked out fine. The CM300 had a low power 1-25w range and a high power 25-45w range. I didn't bother to guy the antenna; I hope that works out ok. The antenna was a RAD4000A. The radio boxes had about ½" of dust on them. I think he was glad to be rid of them since they weren't digital radios.

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So, here we are about 14 days into this thing, and according to KTPI, people are getting sick all over the place. Arnold is coming to the AV to check on things but doesn't plan on staying very long. When he got here, he said that he had good news for us, ninety percent of the people infected with bird flu have been under the age of 40, and 60 percent of them have died, according to the latest analysis from the World Health Organization.

But the WHO researchers stressed their analysis did not suggest why this might be and noted there are several theories on why the H5N1 virus seems to attack younger people. The H5N1 avian influenza virus has infected 272 people in 10 countries since it re-emerged in 2003.

To tell you the truth, I don't think their count is right now, this started 2 weeks ago and I know for a fact that more than 166 people have died. That might have been correct before that plane left Atlanta, but it was old news now. The good news was that none of us were sick. We didn't go see Arnold because of the crowd, a good way to pick up a bug.

Apparently at least 6 people had died in the Antelope Valley and who knows how many in LA or Georgia. I tried CNN and Fox, but they were guessing, more interesting in suggesting how many could die than how many had actually died. One of the commentators they had on Fox News was speculating about Anthrax. Anthrax has totally different symptoms and can be treated with Penicillin, Doxycycline, or Cipro, although the best route is probably Doxycycline. I had some of that for quite a while, ever since Russ mentioned it to me and I researched it. It was probably expired; cyclines have 1 year shelf life.

That speculation led to speculation that we were under attack from a bioweapon. Someone at the White House must have been watching the news, not long after, the

EAS warning sounded and a Doctor from the CDC was refuting any speculation that this was Anthrax. He went on to compare the symptoms of both diseases and it was plainly clear that no one had any of the three types of Anthrax: cutaneous, gastrointestinal or inhalational.

"Huh doh."

"Gar-Bear, Ron. Did you go see Arnold?"

"Nope. I don't have the bird flu and I ain't going anywhere where I might get it. Besides, you know Arnold."

"Huh?"

"He'll be back. Anyway, the WHO says that the bird flu seems to hit people under 40, so maybe we're safe."

"If you don't go anywhere, you can't get the flu."

"Right. You wouldn't recognize the neighborhood. Lance and Dave put in a 6' high wrought iron fence and Chris and Dick got together and erected 6' high prefabricated wood fences. Now my fence looks like crap compared to theirs."

"Did you string a vertical wire in the space between the posts?"

"No, why?"

"A determined person might be able to spread the wire and get in."

"I gave you all the barbed wire I had left."

"I'll bring it back and help you do that, see ya."

The wire was only 10" between strands; I couldn't see how they could do that, especially with the dogs. Once he got there, I think Ron agreed, but we ran the vertical string anyway. He mainly wanted to get out of the house, I think. He came in and we sat and drank coffee until the phone rang.

"If that's Linda, tell her I just left."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 5

"Huh doh. Oh, hi Linda. No Ron is outside working, I came in to get a Band-Aid. Maybe an hour, I'll tell him you called."

"It that enough time?"

"You're a pathological liar."

"I'm an alcoholic, it goes with the territory."

"How long do you have now?"

"Eight years and counting. You'll have 15 years this year, won't you?"

"How did you know?"

"That's how long I've known you. Unlike you, I mind having booze in the house, but Sharon likes a bottle of beer or wine once in a while."

"I guess I didn't realize you put the wire so close together, you probably could have gotten by without the vertical wire."

"That's especially true because of how tightly it's stretched and how close together the posts are. No matter, we just made it stronger. However, a pair of wire cutters would make short work of that fence. I like the looks of the wrought iron fence that Lance put in, but I'll bet it was expensive. He sharpened those arrowheads on the top of the fence. When this is over, he'll have to take them down and dull them or face getting sued. You do know that if you had gotten an RS12000, you could have switched it from gas to propane in about 10 minutes, don't you?"

"We got the option; we can do that with this one."

"Ok, how much propane do you have?"

"500 gallons. I got to thinking after I talked to you about it and my friend over at Ameri-Gas brought me a 550 gallon tank. He said it shouldn't be a problem getting it refilled at any time."

"You'd better hope so, Ron. At full load that generator can burn almost 2 gallons per hour. Conversely, propane contains more energy than natural gas so you have more power available."

"I still think we're better off than you are."

"You are, as long as you don't lose gas. In an ideal world, we'd both have bomb shelters, 45kw standby generators, fuel for 2 years, a 2 year supply of food and medicine, and enough ammo to fight WW III."

"In an ideal world, we'd have a vaccine and not have to worry about the bird flu."

"Yeah, that too."

Ron hung around as long as he dared and headed home. I turned on Fox News so I could listen to Shepard Smith blow this thing totally out of proportion. I almost liked Geraldo better than him. Since Geraldo got his chest in a wringer over that map in the sand in Iraq, he'd toned down, a little.

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There seemed to be two focal points, the southeast and the far west. That unsuspecting person who had flown out of Atlanta spreading the flu far and wide had died. The hospitals in most of the southeast were overwhelmed and California was so short on hospital beds, most people were given Tamiflu or Relenza and sent home. The Governor had issued an Executive Order controlling the distribution of anti-viral drugs. The only good news was that there were lots of doses of anti-viral drugs because the bird flu had taken so long to mutate.

There was also unrest in most of the large cities now, primarily because of the shortage of food, drugs and fuel. As more and more people got sick, the transportation system was breaking down. The warehouses were starting to be a little short staffed and couldn't load the trucks as fast, plus quite a few drivers hadn't shown up for work. Most grocery stores, drug stores and service stations had curtailed their hours of service due to a lack of goods and customers.

We still had all of the utilities and although some usual faces were missing from some of the local TV stations, they were managing to stay on the air. By local, I mean LA TV stations, channels 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13. I refused to watch the news on channel 4, preferring channel 7 or 2. It was all about the personalities of some of the anchors, Paul Moyer was convinced a gun could kill someone even if it was unloaded and in a box.

Up to this point in time, everything seemed to be working as planned, ergo, most people were staying home, the LEOs, Guard and State Defense Force were dealing with the troublemakers and some food, fuel and drugs were still available. On the other hand, those facemasks became the new seatbelt, if you didn't have one on when you were out, someone would pull you over. You got a free mask plus a \$200 traffic ticket for operating a motor vehicle in an unsafe manner. We started using nitrile gloves to change the litter pans some time back and had about 20 boxes on the shelf.

Because the disposable N-95 masks didn't last long, we had 3 cases of the 3M (8210) masks, less what we'd already used. They come 20 masks to the box, 8 boxes to the

case and run about \$100 a case. We had one case of small masks and 2 cases of large masks. There were cheaper masks out there, but I've always felt that you get what you pay for. Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) also made more permanent masks but they were somewhat expensive and you still had to buy filters. It's not like you get a Pandemic every day. Ron and Linda had the cheaper Ammex masks which came 240 masks per case for about \$120. They only had one size, so I gave him a box of the small 3M masks for the baby. She wasn't a baby anymore, but that's how Ron always referred to her.

When we lose gas, Ronald had better be on the phone to AmeriGas pronto. At half load, it burns 1.8gph. The stats are 1.2, 1.8, 2.0 and 2.3gph and with 500 gallons of propane, he won't have much more than 217, 250, 277 and up to 416 hours at minimum power, maybe 12 days at ½ power. That's why, in my stories, I always opt for 3,000 gallons or more. Most of the time I went for the smaller RS15000, although as I look back, it isn't much better on fuel than the RS20000. Ideally, you'd need an RS30000 for full power (125amps @ 240v). And who, but a dealer or a farmer, has more than 500 gallons? Until the power goes down, it's moot anyway.

From my viewpoint none us was in good shape if things got really tough. Lance had the same firepower I had, but he had combat experience. I knew I'd be better off at a distance because if I actually saw the face of someone I shot, I might lose my nerve.

The war didn't end in Iraq, but as far as the news was concerned, it could have. I had to search around to learn that we were still getting our butt kicked. It seems that some of those missiles that Russia sold to Iran or Syria had made their way to Iraq and were being used to shoot down our helicopters. The missile in question was the SA-18 GROUSE Iгла 9K38 aka SA-N-10 GROUSE Iгла-M. According to reports, it was as good as or better than the FIM-92A Stinger. These are also sometimes called MANPADS. The Specs are:

Length: 5 feet 7 inches (1.7 meters)

Maximum range: 17,000 feet (5,200 meters)

Maximum altitude: 11,500 feet (3,500 meters)

Payload: 4.6 pounds (1.27 kilograms) high explosive

Tracking: Dual-channel passive infrared

Maximum target engagement speed: 710-900 miles per hour (1,140-1,450 kilometers per hour)

Deployment time: 13 seconds

Who cares about South African surplus .308 when you have things like this making the rounds? You wait, if there is anyway ol' Dubya can make an Iran connection, it's Katie bar the door, pandemic or not. Was there really a pandemic or was this just a trick to get our minds off the war? Hey, it's just a question, inquiring minds want to know. (All you authors out there can see how easy it is to go from a global pandemic to WW III.)

We've heard about the pandemic on TV and radio, but have you actually seen any bodies? Do you know anyone who is sick with anything besides the regular flu? I just spent over \$300 on disposable face masks; there'd BETTER be a pandemic!!! We've built fences to keep the sick people out, I have enough stabilized gasoline in my backyard to blow up a city block and I like beans and rice, but prefer Chinese to Mexican.

"Hey."

"Hey what?"

"I've been thinking..."

"We're in trouble now."

"But wait, Ron. Do you know anyone who has died from the flu? Do you know anyone who has gotten sick from the flu? When was the last time you heard them talking about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan? How many Executive Orders as George invoked in the name of the pandemic? Would Arnold really come to Palmdale if we had the bird flu here?"

"No, no, not in a while, who knows and I doubt it. You're working on another conspiracy theory?"

"We're getting our butts kicked in Iraq and it's beginning to feel like it did in the late '60 and early '70s. You got Cindy what's her name going around protesting the war and she's got half of Hollywood on her side. I'm beginning to think that Joe McCarthy was right about them. I may have to vote for Ron Paul."

"Slow down, geez. Did you go check Global Security? They always have good war news."

"I did, in fact, do that. That's how I know the war is still on. Pick a cable news channel and see what they're talking about. CNN and MSNBC are dissing the Prez over the Pandemic and Fox says it isn't his fault. No one is talking about the war."

"What set you off?"

"Someone sent me a picture of a missile in the mail. After much discussion over the net using email, we, actually he, decided that it was a SA-18 Grouse. Hezbollah has them and someone is using them in Iraq. That's what's been taking down all of our helicopters. Before you ask, it's the Russian equivalent to a Stinger. I checked and CNN says they go for \$100k a pop on the street. Everyone knows Iran is funding the insurgency."

"So, what are you saying? The pandemic is a cover so the Prez can attack Iran?"

"Why do we need 2 carrier strike groups in the Persian Gulf? He extended the Eisenhower and sent the Stennis. What's more, Russia is spending money to upgrade their military and China is going flat out trying to build a fleet. I checked and the Eisenhower is off the Somali coast, the Stennis is on its way to the Persian Gulf, the Kitty Hawk is in Hong Kong, and the Nimitz, Roosevelt, Truman and Reagan are surge-ready."

"So, you think we're going to go to war with Iran?"

"I don't know, Ron, but it's getting time to start buying bags of cement. Doesn't it strike you as odd that we can come and go as we please as long as we're wearing face masks?"

"What's the cement for?"

"You can stack bags of cement to form an emergency bomb shelter."

"Why would you need a bomb shelter?"

"In case someone starts dropping bombs?"

"Have you been drinking?"

"Yes, but only coffee."

"Well, I think you're crazy."

"Ok, maybe I'm wrong, but do yourself a favor and think about it."

"Now you sound like Tony."

"Yeah, I guess I do, sorry. Why don't you go to Global Security and look for yourself. If you still think I'm nuts, call me back and tell me; otherwise borrow that pickup and let's go to Lowes. They have a good price on 90 pound bags of Quikrete, only \$3.27."

"How many do you think it will take?"

"I don't know, but at 90 pounds a bag, it gonna take several trips."

I started to calculate how many bags it would take. A 12' square shelter would take about 36 bags per row and I figured about 24 rows to make an 8' high shelter. That was 864 bags plus I'd need a lid, probably 4x4s and 2 layers of bags. I was guessing the dimensions of the bags as 16"wx24"lx6"h. A 12x12 square was 144ft² and it would take another 108 bags for the lid plus the 4x4s and some plywood. And, that would only give us a protection factor of 10. It looked like about \$3,400 for a lousy improvised shelter. Time for plan B. For \$1,000 worth of timber I could undermine a portion of the slab and support it well enough to stack the soil on top.

I'd seen how they built the box supports they used in mines at the Comstock Lode. It wouldn't be elegant, but it could work. $12 \times 12 \times 8$ equals $1,152\text{ft}^3$, about 43yd^3 or close to 130,000 pounds of dirt. The main problem wouldn't be the weight of the slab, but the dirt on top. Better make that 4×6 beams on edge and lots of them. I figured about 20 minutes into digging Amy would claim her back hurt and I be doing it by my lonesome. The problem was, I didn't have a plan C, plan B couldn't be done and plan A cost too much. In our small band of original residents, all of us were over 50 and some over 60. Now what? Hope that if WW III happens, the wind is out of the north?

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"Huh doh."

"I checked, you may be right. Ready to go to Lowes?"

"That was plan A, Ron, and I can't afford it. I came up with a plan B but it's not doable. I don't really have a plan C so let's just forget it and hope the wind blows the right way."

"Well good, I didn't say you were right, just that you could be right. I can think of a lot of things to spend money on that don't include building a bomb shelter. For what you'd spend on a shelter, you could buy another 24 drums of gas in case the power goes out."

"I can blow up the entire neighborhood as it is. I was thinking about what I should have done. Aim Surplus had South African for \$187 a case of 980 rounds. I bought 2 cases when I shoulda bought 5 or even 10. Santa Fe Gun Galleria still has a Loaded M1A on the shelf, just like the one I bought. Two rifles would be better than one rifle. Lance sold me 10 extra magazines for my M1A, too."

"Yeah right, the Russians are going to invade your housing tract."

"Never say never, Ron. Over the years I've tried to imagine anything that could happen to us here in Moon Shadows. We're a whole lot closer to some of the things I imagined than I ever thought possible. I'm thinking we may replace the barbed wire with the type of fence Chris and Dick put in. We could also modify the gate to slide rather than swing."

"Did you put up a No Trespassing sign?"

"Doesn't the barbed wire already say that?"

"I suppose, but it's a legal requirement. Lowes has them in English and Spanish."

"What conclusions have you drawn about whether or not we have a pandemic starting?"

"Linda called one of our doctors and asked him. He told her that the only flu cases he'd seen so far were seasonal flu cases."

"What about the person who allegedly died at AV Hospital?"

"He told her that he didn't know about anyone who had died from the flu at AV."

"You trust this guy?"

"With my life, several times."

Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive! (Sir Walter Scott)

"And you think it's all a put on, right?"

"I don't know, but I'm obviously beginning to wonder, yes. It would be a very clever way for the government to mask its true intentions."

"How many carrier groups are deployed?"

"Three with another four surge ready. The Kitty Hawk is making a port call in Hong Kong or whatever. She's not in Japan."

"You want to buy that revolver?"

"How much?"

"\$600 cash."

"Done. I got to ask mama how much is in the bank, maybe we should go buy the second rifle at the Galleria."

"So, you're convinced that there's no pandemic?"

"I'm leaning that way. I wonder where I can buy more of the South African ammo. Widener's had it, but it was expensive, \$300 a case plus shipping (sold out). Maybe I can get some Paki. Hang on... Ok, pick me up ASAP, let's get that rifle bought."

That Son of a Gun raised the price of the rifle \$100, he was now asking \$1,699 rather than \$1,599. However, it was on the shelf and I could have it in 15 days. I bought the rifle and another Springfield Armory sling. I gave Ron a check for the revolver and we stopped by High Desert and I bought another 7 boxes of the .357 ammo. When I got home, I went surfing on the web and came up with Paki in 1,000 round cans and bought 4 cans. A quick call to Charles City got the credit limit raised for 2 days on my debit card and I called back and ordered 4 more cans. Finally I went to Ammoman and ordered 50 magazines to be delivered to Derek.

"Hey kid."

"Hi dad, what's up?"

"You didn't get deployed did you?"

"How did you know?"

"I think this bird flu thing is all a scam. I ordered more magazines and when they come, ship them overnight to me. I'll send you a check for \$100 to cover the cost."

"Why do you think it's a scam?"

"Supposedly it hit Atlanta, LA and San Francisco first. We were supposed to have several cases in the AV, some fatal. It doesn't wash, Ron's wife checked with their doctor and he said no one had the bird flu that he knew of."

"Maybe you're right, I don't know, Dad. What have you been up to?"

"We bought 24 drums of gas and have them all stacked by the back fence. We stocked up on food, masks and most anything we could think of. Even went so far as to build a barbed wire fence."

"You get so carried away sometimes."

"Well, I just got back from the gun store where I bought a second M1A Loaded. I ordered 8,000 rounds of Paki and those 50 magazines. Plus Ron sold me a .357 magnum revolver."

"When are you putting in the bomb shelter?" he snickered.

"Haven't figured that one out yet, I'll let you know what I come up with."

"You sound like you think we're about to have WW III."

"It's not a question of if, just when and what."

He and I talked for an hour, him telling me about what he was doing and me trying to get him to take what I was saying serious. I explained that all it would take would be for some Iranian officer to launch a missile on one of our carriers in the Persian Gulf and all bets were off. Those 4 carriers would set sail within 24 hours and they'd be loading the B-2s at Whiteman ready to strike Iran. It wouldn't be the first time the American public had been lied to, think Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Bill said, I want to say one thing to the American people. *I want you to listen to me. I'm gonna say this again. I did not have*

sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinski. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never. These allegations are false.

You see, it's relatively easy to protect yourself from the flu, a quarantine works very well, if it's adhered to. And even if it's not, you can wear a mask and it's likely to protect you. On top of that, there's Tamiflu and several anti-viral drugs that seem to work. How do you protect yourself from *The Big Lie*? The most you can hope for is to stay informed on what's going on in the world. Don't believe the media, they're often wrong.

Want an example? Most media outlets reported that the Republicans in the Senate voted to stop the debate on the Reid Resolution to indicate the Senate's displeasure with George surging the troops in Iraq. That's not true. What the Senate voted on was Closure, the Republicans defeating an attempt by Reid to STOP the debate. The Washington Times got it right; everyone else mostly got it wrong.

Derek has a very high opinion of George W. Bush, I'm beginning to wonder. I remember Vietnam, he wasn't born yet. At Wartburg, I was the sole student in a class of about 40 who supported the war. Hell, I even defended the fire-bombing of Dresden and Tokyo and the atom bombs we dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I've voted Republican my whole life, starting with Barry Goldwater. Some of my positions on things may be not quite so conservative; I believe a woman has a right of choice in the case of rape or incest, for example. But I generally support the party line. I consider myself a Christian and happen to be of the Methodist denomination. Sally Field was right, you know; Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get.

All this was inspired by the principle – which is quite true in itself – that in the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily; and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods. It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying. These people know only too well how to use falsehood for the basest purposes. Adolf Hitler – Mein Kampf

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No, I'm not comparing George W. Bush to Adolf Hitler; I was just explaining the origins of the term *The Big Lie*. The phrase was also used (on page 51) in a report prepared during the war by the United States Office of Strategic Services in describing Hitler's psychological profile. *His primary rules were: never allow the public to cool off; never*

admit a fault or wrong; never concede that there may be some good in your enemy; never leave room for alternatives; never accept blame; concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong; people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it. - OSS report page 51.

Appeal to emotion is a logical fallacy which uses the manipulation of the listener's emotions, rather than valid logic, to win an argument. This kind of appeal to emotion is a type of red herring and encompasses several logical fallacies, including:

- Appeal to consequences
- Appeal to fear
- Appeal to flattery
- Appeal to pity
- Appeal to ridicule
- Appeal to spite
- Wishful thinking

Other types of fallacies may also overlap with or constitute an appeal to emotion, including:

- Ad hominem attacks
- Guilt by association
- Misleading vividness
- Slippery slope
- Truthiness
- Two wrongs make a right (if arguing for revenge)

R. Lee Ermey lives here in Palmdale and shops the same guns stores I do. His favorite is High Desert Storm. IMDb says, *Former US Marine Corps Drill Instructor R. Lee Ermey was not originally hired to play Gunnery Sgt. Hartman but as a consultant for the Marine Corps boot camp portion of the film. He performed a demonstration on videotape in which he yelled obscene insults and abuse for 15 minutes without stopping, repeating himself or even flinching – despite being continuously pelted with tennis balls and oranges. Stanley Kubrick was so impressed that he cast Ermey as Gunnery Sgt. Hartmann. He was involved in a jeep accident during the making of the movie. At 1:00 am one night he skidded off the road, breaking all the ribs on his left side. He refused to pass out, and kept flashing his car lights until a motorist stopped. In some scenes you'll notice that he does not move his left arm at all. The other actors playing recruits never met Ermey prior to filming.*

The Bird Flu – Chapter 6

When I finally get my mind made up to something I carry it through to the bitter end. I was becoming convinced that Bird Flu scare was just that, a scare tactic designed to get our minds off what was really going down. I hadn't figured out what that was yet, but I was working on it. Meanwhile I'd taken all the available money and invested it in security. Those were the 15 longest days of my life, waiting for the rifle to be released. By the time it was ready, the ammo had arrived and Derek had forwarded the magazines. So also had the Tac-Force chest harness I got from trading post supply.

My first M1A need one click to the right to be right on target. Until I could get to the range again, the factory sighting would have to do. I set up a second chest harness using the Paki ammo, reserving the South African to use in my first rifle. The magazines were interchangeable so it didn't really matter. The only Rambo knife I had left was Rambo I. I took the smaller knife I had and taped it to the second harness strap. I also took the new Wave for my original harness and use my old one on the new harness. I didn't have a second knife/flashlight case so I kept the only one I had on the old harness.

I could carry as many as 14 magazines in the chest harness using the grenade pockets on each end, so I did that. Plus I taped two mags together using duct tape and kept those in the rifles, condition 3. I didn't have fanny packs I could carry an extra battle pack or two in, but they were so heavy, I was almost glad. I only need one more thing, a pair of speed loaders for the .357. The remaining mags were loaded and in a box on the shelf of my computer table. It was mighty strange that I could buy ammo over the internet and get it delivered by UPS. That was strange because one would have thought with the nationwide quarantine the last thing running would be UPS.

While I was waiting for the time to pass and the deliveries to come in, I reorganized our first aid supplies. We had too many bandages and too few of other things. I called Dr. J and asked, then begged before I got him to prescribe a case of saline and 24 IV sets plus the needle sets to establish the IVs. If the LAFD could get by with only carrying normal saline, I sure could get by with normal saline. I got a case (24 bags) of 500ml bags. I replaced my old stethoscope and that gave me 2 ways to check blood pressure, the aneroid cuff and stethoscope or the wrist style checker I normally used.

One trip to Wal-Mart was all it took to round out our first aid supplies, adding Icy Hot, more Band-Aids, additional insulin syringes, and so forth. We also refilled our prescriptions, thereby maintaining our stock of meds at 7 months. By now, I had talked myself out of believing in the pandemic and was waiting for WW III to begin. I was depending on logic and third hand news when I made the decision. This would be one case where my being careful would pay off. It turns out there actually was a Pandemic and that doctors weren't talking about the deaths. These things happen in waves with the first wave being rather small in comparison to later.

What's more, HHS Secretary Leavitt had said it could take 6-8 months to develop a vaccine after the bird flu mutated. Then, you had a distribution problem getting it into the hands of the people who needed it. Off on my jag, I'd improved security, probably doubled it. You could say I was at my fighting weight, 10,000 rounds of .308, 500 rounds of .357 and several hundred rounds shotgun ammo.

Dick had his radio shack in an upstairs bedroom facing the street. It was placed so he could keep an eye on the street and his fence wasn't a problem. Chris had a one story house and for him to see over his fence, he'd have to stand on a box in his garage. When he finally picked up his Mossberg from Big Five, he had returned my pistol. And me? I was totally confused, not knowing what to believe. There was conflicting information on whether or not we had a pandemic going. I'd talked myself into believing we were just one rocket away from attacking Iran. Before a strike group can achieve an MCO Surge-Ready status, it needs to demonstrate all of its capabilities. Only then can the strike group be certified ready to conduct forward-deployed operations.

As part of my overall planning, I pondered what would happen if my survey meter were in Texas getting recalibrated and a war broke out? The solution came in having 2 survey meters with different calibration dates. I'd still have one while the other was off being recalibrated. This time I bought a CD V-717, the one with the remote sensor. That gave me 2 survey meters, 5 dosimeters and 1 dosimeter charger, all locked up in the storage cabinet with only one key.

It was going really well until I angered Sharon. It was a simple question having to do with toilet paper. On average we use one roll a day, or it seems like we do. A six month supply meant having 6 30 roll bundles on the shelf at all times. I counted and only came up with 5. All I asked was if she was planning on getting a couple more bundles of toilet paper. It must have been my timing; I'd just finished having her rub mineral ice on my back to alleviate the strain I got moving those 8 cases of ammo.

You never did something that stupid, I suppose? She didn't let up either, once she was on a roll. What was I going to do with 2 rifles and 10,000 rounds of old ammo? How did I want the ammo fixed, fried, baked or stewed? What good did having 2 survey meters do when we didn't have a bomb shelter and weren't likely to get one? Did we really need 210 rolls of toilet paper? And finally, was I going to eat all of the beans because she sure wasn't?

We'd been married off and on for over 31 years. During that time I learned the best reply was to listen and listen carefully, saying nothing. Any question she really wanted answered would get asked a second time. Then and only then was an answer expected.

"No, we don't need 210 rolls of toilet paper, but it doesn't spoil, dear. If you cook the beans I'll eat them, provided you fix them the way I like."

"Chili?"

"Chili. With beans, onions, ground beef, tomato sauce and chili powder."

"Fine, you eat chili and the rest of us will eat real food. You can eat it three times a day for all I care."

That seemed to signal the end of the confrontation. It happens twice a year, come rain or shine. It's usually triggered by some simple comment like that. I rarely spent money and when I did it was usually on family preparedness, or so I'd rationalized. If nothing else, I kept the second rifle out the hands of someone who might use it to do us harm. (Besides, I wanted the rifle.)

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My fellow Americans,

We have succeeded in isolating the mutated virus and work has begun to develop a vaccine. The CDC assures me we will have a vaccine available for distribution not later than six months from now. Meanwhile, preventative measures had worked well.

We have experienced minor disruptions in our supply system which has been attributed to people hoarding food. Effective immediately, food rationing will apply. Food will be available on a weekly basis and limited only by the size of your family. Each person will be limited to 3,000 calories per day.

Fuel supplies have been reduced due to refinery worker absences and a lack of transportation. Fuel coupons will be available at your local Department of Motor Vehicles or similar state agency. Motorists in non-critical occupations will generally be limited to 20 gallons of gasoline a week, depending upon local supply.

Supplies of N-95 rated masks are available in every community. Individual Governors have implemented local restrictions concerning their use. If you cannot afford masks, a supply has been made available to all Medicaid recipients.

Finally, questions have arisen concerning our military forces and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our troop increases were completed before the onset of the flu. To insure our fleet remains ready, the Carrier Strike Groups have been surged out of port and are station-keeping off the coast. No additional strike groups have been sent to the Middle East. The Eisenhower, due to rotate out in March, will be replaced by the Nimitz, maintaining our presence in the Persian Gulf.

According to CDC scientists, this first wave of infections was the smallest and we can expect a second and possible third wave before the vaccine becomes available. We have released the stored medicines from the Strategic National Stockpile in order to assist localities and critical infrastructure jobs.

Laura and I wish every American family well and urge you to continue the quarantine restrictions in your local communities. God Bless America.

"Bull. Do you believe that crap? I wonder what the DEFCON status in Russia is up to. Station keeping off the coast? Right, who's coast?"

"Gar-Bear, I thought it was good speech. It answered all the questions you raised and his explanations were reasonable. You're too cynical."

"Maybe I am and maybe I'm not. Do you agree with me that a war is possible?"

"Possible, yes; probable no. Iran has to know that if they attack one of our ships we will make an all-out retaliation. I don't think that Ayatollah over there would let that happen, if it was only up to that crackpot President they have, it might be a different story. You heard that news conference Bush had a few weeks ago, he stopped short of saying that the Iranian government was responsible for the Iranian weapons being in Iraq."

"Yeah, I saw it. There isn't any doubt who is making the weapons either, that was plain enough. President Bush said he was convinced an elite Iranian military unit with government ties was putting weapons in the hands of Iraqi insurgents. But, Bush says he does not know for sure if Iran's top leaders are involved. Army Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, a Multinational Force Iraq spokesman, told a group of online journalists that Iranian interference in Iraq, particularly the export of deadly 'explosively formed penetrator' components and technology, must be made public after diplomatic and military efforts to deter the practice had been unsuccessful."

"It would be our luck if they dropped a warhead on Plant 42. Neither one of us has a shelter; I'm pretty sure it would take out the entire town of Palmdale."

"I don't think so, Ronald. It might depend on where they aimed. The Skunk Works is over on the Sierra Highway, housed in the hanger where they used to build the L-1011. I wouldn't know that except for the logo, have you seen it?"

"Seen what?"

"It's a picture of a skunk. Must be 6' high and it's on the upper corner of the building as viewed from Sierra Highway."

"What are they working on now?"

"The Joint Strike Fighter, F-35."

"I heard something recently about the F-35. Can't recall what it was, but it sounded important."

"You probably heard about the engine project they want to drop after investing \$4 billion in it. That was around Valentine's Day if I recall."

"Are you convinced yet that we have a Pandemic in progress?"

"More so now than I was before. I'd about talked myself out of believing the claims the media was making. Could it be that the doctor Linda talked to was being less than honest?"

"I told you I trust him with my life, I didn't say he was honest."

"He's the one who does the angioplasty?"

"He is now, Dr. E hasn't been well and that thing with his wife all but destroyed him. He's only practicing occasionally now."

"Well, I know how to get a shelter, but I don't know if I want to spend the money."

"How?"

"Do you know how many calls we get from people wanting to refi the house?"

"Interest rates are up now."

"Yeah to 7%. Our loan is only about 35% of the appraised value, we could get \$40-\$50 thou at the drop of a hat."

"Where would you put it?"

"Where else, the backyard. We could go up to 30' wide and about 50' long. The only problem I can see is getting those neighbors of ours to allow them to drive the excavator through their back yard. They'd have to move the soil, pour the foundation and walls then put in tanks under the floor. We have to use a sewage pump to empty the waste tank and have some sort of water supply. Plus, I'd have to contact Utah Shelter systems to get a blast door and an air purifier. If we did the finish work on the inside, I figure we could build it for maybe \$25 grand and equip it for another \$7,500. Then all we'd need would be a generator and propane tank."

"Another generator?"

"One that runs on propane, not gasoline."

"You said yourself that I don't have enough propane, how much propane are you talking here?"

"You'd have to plan on enough to run a generator for up to 2,400 hours, maybe 5,000 gallons."

"Do you know how big a 5,500 gallon propane tank is? You do realize, you'd have to buy the tank, AmeriGas wouldn't put in that large of a tank in a residential neighborhood."

"So make it a \$150,000 mortgage, 50% of the appraised value."

"Never going to happen, Gar-Bear. You'd never get a permit for that big a tank in this neighborhood, no way. You're talking about a generator buried in the shelter running off of outside air and with the exhaust piped outside too, right?"

"Yeah."

"Never happen. You'd never get the permits. Where do you think you live, Iowa?"

"A pipe dream, huh?"

"What kind of dope you been smoking? A pipe dream hell, it's a nightmare. How big of a generator? 20kw, they're \$12 grand with a 200 amp automatic transfer switch and you'd have to go all electric. 2,400 hours with a 90% fill probably isn't enough propane either, not at 2gph. All electric means drawing close to 75% power on that generator. You did say about 2gph at 75% power, right?"

"I did."

"You'd need a 10,000 gallon tank. When do you plan to move? Listen, pard, you'll need a diesel generator, propane won't cut it. That way, you can get by with a 5,000 gallon diesel tank. Figure about \$13,500 installed, plus the tank and fuel."

"Whatever."

"That will solve your heat problem too. It should generate more than enough heat. Figure on losing that shed of yours or moving it until the shelter is installed. You can go 30' by 55', giving you 1,650ft². That's bigger than your house, but you're going to need it, separate bedrooms, right? Kitchenette with microwave, electric stove, small refrigerator and oven. Probably two of those air purifiers, AV-150? CO₂ scrubber too. Cheaper if you put in dorms with bunk beds. Figure 2 folding tables, a dozen folding chairs, a ham radio and antennas, right? Right. Ok, now you'll want to put in food for 10 people for what, a year? After it's in and graded, you'll need a new sprinkler system and sod – you'll want it to look nice."

"You read my mind, Ron. Perfect. I'll probably just live down there. I can put in a winch and use the old refrigerator plus move the freezer. I can burn up the gas in car, except

for a couple of drums to run the portable generator when we're servicing the diesel. Yep, now you have the idea."

"Sharon will have you committed."

"Nah, she's mad at me for the moment. When I left her for bimbo number 1, the house was free and clear. By the time I got back, she'd remodeled the house and put in sod. Plus she owed \$70 grand on the house."

"You're lucky she took you back."

"You've said that before. Sometimes I agree and sometimes I wonder. Any way you look at it, it was a damned expensive lesson. And no. it wasn't worth it. Might as well have them build a block wall on both sides while we're at it. Maybe the loan will big enough to put in a wrought iron fence out in front. If we do it, I'll save you a place, just in case."

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I sat on the back patio and supervised. Sharon wanted to fix up the inside of the house; she put in the simulated wood flooring that was pet proof, Pergo. Plus she replaced all the windows and doors with nice ones from Pella. The contractor slid the shed onto the slab. Then he dug a hole about 20' deep and temporarily stored the dirt somewhere. They found the pipe I ran for electricity and said we could use that. I got what I needed from Sharon Packer at Utah Shelter Systems and several pieces were installed in that concrete box as it was built and before they poured the lid.

In fact, he ended up waiting to pour the lid until the stuff arrived from Switzerland. I had 3 sets of filters because bad things happen in 3s. You've seen the ad on TV where the guy talks about his new car, new house, membership at the Country Club, etc.? Ends up saying that the way he does it is that he's up to his neck in debt? Yeah, we joined his club. It took 2½ gallons of PRI-D. A licensed electrician wired in the generator to the automatic transfer switch and brought 240 volts to the shelter where the ATS was mounted. Only thing was, we ran out of money before we got the sod put in.

After I convinced her that the winch could lift 12,000 pounds, I got Sharon to ride the little chair down to the shelter. Right away, she wanted to change a few things. By the time the shelter was done, the 2nd wave of the bird flu had started up with a vengeance. Somewhere in the process, I ended up with a second 590A1, a pair of Taurus PT1911s, more ammo, a pair of used Ruger Vaqueros in .45 Colt, some leather from Laredo and a Winchester rifle in .45 Colt. AES had the radio I wanted and Ham Radio Outlet the antenna. That 39' mast Dick had given me back began to look like a Christmas tree from all the antennas on top. It was anchored at the bottom and strapped to the house about ½ way up and I still didn't bother to guy it.

"Well partner, what do you think?"

"Man, you really went off the deep end."

"They started the second season of Jericho; you really should watch the show, it shows what we're in for. I put in surplus military bunks like you suggested. We have enough for the five of us, Lance and Elvia, Dave Lucky, Chris, Patti and Daniel and Dick. Not to mention the bunks for you and your family. Be sure to bring all of your guns and ammo when the war starts."

"Where's the smoking section?"

"In the generator room, we'll have to wear earplugs."

"Ok, I'm officially impressed. Is there anything I can add?"

"You can order several bottles of KIO_3 from Medical Corps and order dosimeters from Radmeters4U."

"How long you figure we'll be down there if there is a war?"

"That all depends, anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 plus months."

"Did you hear the Prez last night?"

"Nope, what did he know?"

"He said that they had finally narrowed in on a vaccine. Went on to say that it will take some time to produce enough for everyone. Seems like the mutated form of the flu managed to get out of the country and the Pandemic is worldwide. He said that's it's really going to be bad."

"Did he say anything about the war?"

"Iraq? Well, sorta. He implied that his plan isn't working and he said we may have to pull out."

"I'm sorry I missed that. Anything else?"

"He said something about China, but I missed that part. He did say that as part of the fleet deployment offshore that they also sortied all of the boomers."

"So we have 11 carrier strike groups deployed and all the boomers?"

"If I understood right, yes."

"What about the SSGNs?"

"Three are deployed and the last one is just finishing up conversion."

"So you do keep informed."

"Not like you, I don't."

"Here," I said handing Ron the second M1A. "Get used to a real gun. When the stuff does hit the fan, your big rifles will be too much gun and that poodle shooter 5.56x45mm won't be enough. It hasn't been sighted in at a range yet, but the first one only need one click of windage and I figure this will be close enough until we get a chance to go to the range."

"I'll take you to the range. You have everything we need?"

"What day is it?"

"Friday, why?"

"Good, we'll get a senior discount. Sharon, Ron and I are going to get the new rifle sighted in."

"Are you sure it's ok to drive way down there?"

"Should be. Do you know something I don't?"

"Not really, no. Are you sure you want to be an hour away from home?"

"We really do need to get the new rifle sighted in. It won't be like the trip I made with Derek and Mary. We'll take loaded magazines and only shoot enough to sight the rifle in. We'll be back in 3 hours."

"She may have a point, Gar-Bear. That's a long ways off if something were to happen. Besides, I don't need to order any KIO₃ or those dosimeters, I did that when they started to dig the hole. I bought 10 bottles and 10 dosimeters. I did one stop shopping, Radmeters4U carries Medical Corps KIO₃, but you have to ask. We're about the same size so I bought 2 gas masks and 2 Tyvek suits. Did you get that CD V-717 all hooked up and ready to go?"

"Yes sir. So when does the fun begin?"

"You think this is going to be fun? Sharon, has he lost his mind?"

"I don't care, Ron, I got the windows, doors and flooring put in. Got the inside of the house repainted too. He wants a bomb shelter so he has a bomb shelter. Do you like chili too?"

"Why?"

"He went nuts on pinto beans, kidney beans, dried onion flakes, ground beef and chili powder. I think there must be 100 pounds of Costco ground beef in the freezer. And then, there's all the TVP he bought. Have you tasted some of that stuff? Yuck."

An example of the TVP she was talking about was Bacos. It wasn't the same as real bacon bits, but the taste was about right. Walton had about any flavor a person wanted, bacon, beef, barbeque, chicken, ham, Italian sausage, pepperoni, sausage, sloppy joe and taco. The stuff came in 25 pound boxes and ran about \$40-\$50 a box. They have a new price list, pl51, which came out in 2007.

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With 2 identical rifles, I had a problem keeping them straight. It may have been out of arrogance, but to distinguish them, I painted a white feather on mine, just a little one, a sign of respect for Carlos Hathcock, the real White Feather. Man, I couldn't see as far as he could shoot, no one would ever mistake me for him. Said Hathcock, in his book, of his career as a sniper: *I like shooting, and I love hunting. But I never did enjoy killing anybody. It's my job. If I don't get those bastards, then they're gonna kill a lot of these kids we got dressed up like Marines. That's just the way I see it.* After the war, a friend showed Hathcock a passage written by Ernest Hemingway: *Certainly there is no hunting like the hunting of man, and those who have hunted armed men long enough and like it, never really care for anything else thereafter.* He copied Hemingway's words on a piece of paper. *He got that right,* Hathcock said. *It was the hunt, not the killing.*

"This is Linda. Ron came down with flu. We're all taking Tamiflu and I thought I'd better warn you since he's spent more time over there in the past week than he has at home."

"Is he going to be ok?"

"Yes, the first sign of it, he started taking Tamiflu. He's not nearly as sick as I thought he would be. Since we were exposed, we waited 2 days and started the routine ourselves. You have the stuff and he wanted me to warn you."

"Thanks, Linda, tell him to get better soon. We'll all start with it as a prophylactic. Do you think he's going to be ok?"

"He hasn't gotten any sicker since he started the anti-viral. I think so, yes. He said for you to watch TV tonight, the President is going to make an announcement. If it's important, you can call me and I'll relay the message to him."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 7

My Fellow Americans,

At 1pm local time, a member of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, an Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer, was struck by an Iranian missile. As a consequence of this action, I have raised the defense condition to DEFCON 3 and the Threat Level to Red. I have ordered all available CSGs to steam to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf area at flank speed.

This assault shall not go unanswered. Pending a determination of the National Security Staff, we will not respond to this unprovoked act. At this time, I consider all options open, up to and including a nuclear response. Ambassador Burns is in consultation with President Putin and Ambassador Randt is in discussions with representatives of the People Republic of China concerning this unwarranted attack.

Secretary Rice is attempting to establish communications with Tehran through the good offices of Saudi Arabia. Thank you, what is it? Uh, I am informed that the state of Israel is at the highest state of alert in response to cross border attacks from Lebanon. I suggest that the American people take all necessary preparations in the event this situation escalates."

This office will keep you advised. Thank you and good night.

"This is Gary; Bush just announced we're at DEFCON 3. Oh, the Iranians attacked a destroyer. No, he didn't say if it sunk. He says we're in consultation with Moscow and Beijing and Condie Rice is trying to get in touch with someone in Tehran. He said we should take all necessary preparations. Not yet, I'd wait and see if they declare an Air Defense Emergency. At the moment, we're at a Defense Emergency. Oh, the attack wasn't against the country, that's an Air Defense Emergency. You'd better tell Ronald to load up his guns and ammo."

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If you watched *The Day After*, you saw how tensions built until something let loose and the major powers attacked each other. By the time that had happened, the major powers had exhausted all options. Moscow tried to get the Iranians to back off; they had a different agenda. The Saudis were unable to broker talks with Tehran and finally, the Israelis, in desperation, bombed the Iranian nuclear facilities. They were getting hit from Gaza, Lebanon and even Syria. Egypt stayed out of the conflict as did the Saudis, Jordanians and the Lebanon government. This was the day the chickens came home to roost and Fatah, Hamas and Hezbollah attacked Israel with Russian weapons supplied by Iran.

The only ones who came down with the flu were Ron and Clarence. Everyone who had been in contact with him began taking Tamiflu as a prophylactic. The tensions dragged

on for more than a week and the President never came back on TV, The media was screaming, trying to find out what was going on, but this time everyone who knew had nothing to say. My first clue came when they showed Air Force One departing Andrews AFB. It was during John Gibson's show.

"How are you feeling?"

"Like I was rode hard and put up wet. Geez, was that a trip. What's up?"

"Air Force One just left Andrews AFB and John Gibson wondered why because Bush didn't have an out of town trip scheduled."

"How long has it been?"

"Since the attack? Nine days, enough time for most of those CSGs to get over there. I don't know, but if I were you, I'd bring my family over and have supper with us. Sharon is fixing Tri-tip steak."

"Is there enough for everyone?"

"Yes and probably some of our neighbors. I got everything down to the shelter, because I've had 9 days to get ready. If someone were to attack us, we'd probably get hit with an EMP before they launched their missiles. Damon told me a high altitude burst would take out the stuff on the ground and many of the satellites. Did you already have plans for dinner?"

"Let me check with Lyn."

"You still there?"

"Yes. What did she say?"

"That Sharon and she had already worked it out and she was to bring dessert."

"When will you be here?"

"Lyn said we were leaving as soon as I got a shower."

"About an hour then, you'd better ask her to keep your TV on, just in case."

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The greatness comes not when things go always good for you, but the greatness comes and you are really tested, when you take some knocks, some disappointments, when sadness comes, because only if you have been in the deepest valley can you ever know how magnificent it is to be on the highest mountain... Always remember, others

may hate you. Those who hate you don't win unless you hate them. And then you destroy yourself. - Farewell to White House staff August 9, 1974.

"Everything is on the table except the steaks, Amy has 2 grills going so you can get anywhere from rare to well done."

"Looks good. This is the first time I've really had an appetite since I caught the flu."

"I'll leave the TV on in the background; this thing has gotten way out of control."

"Won't we wait until all of the carriers are in place?"

"The Persian Gulf is a small body of water Ron, we can't put too many carriers there or we'll create a target rich environment. I'd have to ask Damon, he was the sailor. And there's that bottleneck they call the Straits of Hormuz. If anything, I think the Israelis will start it and we'll back their play. They blame Tehran for their problems with Hezbollah and Hamas."

"I'm sort of out of touch, fill me in."

"I can't. There was the first announcement 9 days back and then the announcement about the attack on the Arleigh Burke class destroyer. If they sent all 20 B-2s from Whiteman, it would take them about 22 hours one way. They could make follow on strikes with B-52s from Diego Garcia. Plus we have about 56 Nighthawks and they can each carry 2 weapons. Makes me wish Curtis LeMay was still Chief of Staff of the Air Force."

After dinner, Sharon and Linda rinsed the dishes and loaded the dishwasher. Ron and I adjourned to the office for a smoke. I had the old Sanyo TV set up, but the digital control box and DVD player were already in the shelter along with my computer. I was using a 6' folding table in the shelter for my equipment. Shep was in the middle on interviewing a guest when Time Warner cut away with the EAS screen.

"Aw, crap."

"Wait, let's see what they say."

This is an Air Defense Emergency. Standby for the Commander in Chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command. Radar and satellites indicate that attack upon the continental United States, Canada, or US installations in Greenland by hostile missiles is taking place. You are advised to seek shelter immediately.

"Now, you can say crap."

"I'll get the boys to empty the cars. If you plan to get your neighbors over here you'd better get on that radio and let them know."

It was easier to just go door to door, in 5 minutes I'd let everyone know and was standing by the shelter waiting for Lance to show up. Elvia was hauling a suitcase and he had a 2 wheeler loaded down with ammo. We had a tussle getting Daniel down into the shelter; you never have a ball bat when you need one. About 20 minutes after the EAS message started, we were below and locked up. They had our new flat screen turned to Fox news. I turned on a portable radio and unplugged all of the electronics. After of 2 minutes of news on KTPI, we lost the signal.

"What was that?"

"Probably the EMP. We might just as well sit down and wait for the earthquake."

"What earthquake?"

"LA getting nuked. They might do Edwards too; they can use the dry lakebed to land and store aircraft. I sort of figured this might happen when Dubya left Washington unannounced."

"When did that happen?"

"During the John Gibson show, between 6 and 7pm in Washington."

"Where did he go?"

"Take your pick, Omaha, Colorado Springs, Holloman AFB and a few places I haven't identified."

Over the course of the next 45 minutes we felt, or thought we felt, about 4 missiles hit. I got out the tablet and turned on the CD V-717.

"What's that?"

"A remote meter for radiation. The sensor is topside. There goes the generator, we're on standby power."

"There's coffee made and we hadn't had dessert yet; help yourself," Sharon announced.

"And I thought you were crazy," Chris said.

"Men on the left and ladies on the right. You'll have to make your own beds, there's linen in the cabinet."

"This sucks."

"What sucks?"

"Here we are in the second wave of what you said would be a 3 wave pandemic and missiles are flying. I don't know what it's going to like the day after, didn't we have enough problems already?"

"I've told you a thousand times, Ron, bad things happen in 3s. This pandemic has been looming for about 3-4 years. WW III has been looming since 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini took over Iran. Our country has made mistakes, sure, but all that did was give Iran the excuse it needed to try and take over the Middle East. China becoming a major world power hasn't helped and Russia has been rebuilding their military for some time. I think that's why they kept their factories turning out military goods, when the time came they were set to rebuild on their own."

"And using oil money to do it."

"Right. The only aircraft we have superior to theirs are the B-2, F-117 and the F-22. The F-35 would have given them a run for their money, but it's not in production yet. Why are we on an Air Defense Emergency? Did we strike first or did the other side? Could it be that a third party, like Israel, nuked Iran? Has Iran even been nuked? We'll be a lifetime getting the answers to those questions."

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I woke with a start and looked around to get my bearings. I was in my bed in my bedroom in the house. I had just dreamed the beginning of WW III. When had the dream begun? I looked and sure enough, we had a bomb shelter in the backyard, you could tell because of the bare dirt. There was the trench holding the 24 drums of gasoline. When I first get up, I'm still about half asleep, it takes a while for me to wake up. I used the bathroom and stumbled down the hall to get a cup of coffee.

"Good morning."

"Yeah, right. I just had a really weird dream, WW III began. Does Ron have the flu?"

"You talked to Linda last night and learned he came down with the flu. We're all taking Tamiflu as a precaution."

"I wonder if that was a premonition."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me check something."

My rifle was in the rack. I unlocked the rack and pulled down the rifle. It had a small white feather on the stock, right behind the action. I put the rifle back, plunked down in my chair and lit a cigarette. I just sat there, feeling the nicotine making my legs go

numb, sipping coffee. Sometimes, I had trouble sorting out my dreams from reality, the coffee helped. I needed to finish waking up and get a shower.

I can't tell you why, but this day, I tried on the new jeans Sharon had bought me a year before and had shortened. I had been losing weight, I didn't have to stretch them much to button them. Finally awake, I got a bowl of cereal, took my insulin and pills and turned on the TV.

My Fellow Americans,

At 1pm local time, a member of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, an Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer, was struck by an Iranian missile. As a consequence of this action, I have raised the defense condition to DEFCON 3 and the Threat Level to Red. I have ordered all available CSGs to steam to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf area at flank speed...

I can't tell you where the dream began and reality ended, but I'd heard this speech before. My dream was still vivid in my mind, almost like it had been real and not a dream.

... Rice is attempting to establish communications with Tehran through the good offices of Saudi Arabia. Thank you, what is it? Uh, I am informed that the state of Israel is at the highest state of alert in response to cross border attacks from Lebanon. I suggest that the American people take all necessary preparations in the event this situation escalates.

This office will keep you advised.

"This is Gary, Bush just announced we're at DEFCON 3. Oh, the Iranians attacked a destroyer. No, he didn't say if it sunk. He says we're in consultation with Moscow and Beijing and Condie Rice is trying to get in touch with someone in Tehran. He said we should take all necessary preparations. Not yet, I'd wait and see if they declare an Air Defense Emergency. At the moment, we're at a Defense Emergency. Oh, the attack wasn't against the country, that's an Air Defense Emergency. You'd better tell Ronald to load up his guns and ammo."

"Gary, Ron is pretty sick at the moment. He watched that newscast and knows what Bush said."

"Linda, I had a dream last night about how this ended up. It wasn't good; when I woke up, we were in the shelter waiting for the radiation to rise and Ron and I were discussing how it ever came to this."

"That sounds more like a nightmare."

"I think it may have been a premonition. If that's the case, we have 9 days to get ready."

Perhaps the only thing worse than experiencing WW III was having a premonition 9 days before it began. It may have been a good thing; it gave us 9 days to get ready. That beats the hell out of having *CSI: Miami* interrupted to learn the missiles are incoming. However, no matter how hard you try to recall a dream, it soon fades and all you're left with is a sinking feeling. Then when the events occur as you saw them, you experience déjà vu.

Déjà vu once referred exclusively to the illusion of having been somewhere before or having done something before: *Entering the house for the first time, she had an eerie sense of déjà vu.* Recently, however, it has come to encompass as well the reality of repetitiveness in events or actions: As they began to discuss which route was best, he had a distinct sense of déjà vu. This sense of the word has been extended still further, until the turnaround from the original meaning is almost complete and déjà vu is sometimes also used to describe tedium: Gray winter days bring on déjà vu.

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"Right. The only aircraft we have superior to theirs are the B-2, F-117 and the F-22. The F-35 would have given them a run for their money, but it's not in production yet. Why are we on an Air Defense Emergency? Did we strike first or did the other side? Could it be that a third party, like Israel, nuked Iran? Has Iran even been nuked? We'll be a lifetime getting the answers to those questions."

"It still sucks. You seem to have been well prepared for this, what's up with that?"

"I had a dream the night I learned that you came down with the flu. I woke up in the middle of this conversation."

"I'm going to turn in, which bunk is mine?"

"My bunk has my teddy bears on it. Yours is probably the other one that's made up."

Audrey and Udell had each given me a small teddy bear some time back. One was wearing a sweater that said *#1 Grandpa* and the other was wearing a tie that said, *I love my Dad*. Udell's bunk was the one above mine, but I was planning on staying up all night. I wanted to record the radiation readings as they began to rise.

Around 4am, I put on a pair of headsets and turned on my ham radio. I was greeted with hissing and static, atmospherics, I guess. The CD V-717 had lifted off zero and I recorded the time, 4am and the date, April 15, 2008. Except for a small light, the shelter was totally dark. I could hear snoring coming from both bedrooms, probably not as uncommon among older people. I started a fresh pot of coffee and waited for it to finish dripping so I could refill my cup. The night before, I'd taken all of my pills except those I needed to sleep. I figured to wait until about 6am to take those, with my morning meds and insulin. I'd checked the phone and the lines were down. I had both phone internet,

ADSL, and cable Internet from Time Warner routed into the shelter, but the internet was also down.

Around 5:30, people began to get up, so I made a second pot of coffee and started to fill an urn. We'd probably go through most of the fresh food today and start breaking into the survival foods tomorrow. It had been a real pain in the butt having most of our food in the shelter and we'd kept a small amount of food in the garage. It should be ok; at most we'd have to wash radioactive dust off it. All of the stuff from Walton Feed was in the shelter, stacked.

"Morning."

"Morning, Chris. No, it wasn't a nightmare; you really are in our shelter. There's water on for tea."

"Earl Grey?"

"In the cupboard to the right of the sink."

"What are you doing?"

"Recording the radiation readings every 15 minutes. Once I know the peak radiation level, I can plug the number into a spreadsheet and find out when we can leave."

"I thought you only had to shelter for 2 weeks."

"Actually, you must stay sheltered until the radiation level is down to 104mR/hr. At that level, you won't experience a maximum dose, which is greater than 300R in 120 days."

"I guess we're lucky you built this shelter."

"Then, you forgive me for being a crackpot?"

"I guess I'd be ungrateful if I didn't."

"The timing of this was really bad, coming in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. We're going to have people dying from radiation, the bird flu and all the other diseases that usually pop up after a major disaster."

"Like what?"

"Cholera, Dysentery, lots of diseases related to a bad water supply. You'll have people starve because they can't get food. You'll have people who have access to weapons who would rather steal than grow their own. We're lucky, there's a large open area across the road that only needs water to be able to grow food in."

"I don't suppose we'll see FEMA anytime soon, will we? New Orleans was a good object lesson."

"We do have a slight advantage, there's only one entrance to the housing tract and the remainder is closed in with a 6' high concrete block fence. First things first though, we have to wait out the radiation."

"Morning."

"Morning Dick, coffee's on."

After getting Dick and Chris schooled on the CD V-717 and the CD V-715, and eating a bowl of Special K, I turned in. I was fast asleep in minutes, fatigue and meds kept me there until around 3pm. I finally got up, showered, used the toilet and brushed my teeth. The DVD was playing one of the kids' movies, *Spiderman*. I got coffee, grabbed my smokes and headed to the generator room. Ron was in there puffing away.

"Kind of loud. Sleep well?"

"Didn't dream, that was a relief."

"Now what?"

"We wait until the radiation peaks and plug that info into my spreadsheet. It will tell us when it's safe to leave the shelter. What's the radiation level been doing?"

"Still going up, Gar-Bear."

"Radio still full of static?"

"Yep."

"We have 8 men counting John and Kevin. That would make a 3-hour shift for each of us."

"I wouldn't count on Kevin."

"Well, let's go with 6 4-hour shifts and keep John in reserve."

"Works for me."

"I'll take the midnight to 4am shift and the rest of you can each pick the shift you want."

"I'll take the 8pm until midnight, if it's ok with you, Gar."

"Fine with me, Ron. Finish your smoke and we'll go tell the others."

"Ok fellas, we need to set up watches. Let's get one thing straight right off the bat, this isn't a democracy. It Sharon's and my shelter and if any really hard decisions have to be made, we'll make them. I'll take the midnight to 4am watch and Ron will take the 8pm to midnight watch. John, Kevin and you will be held in reserve. Lance, Chris, Dave and Dick, you can decide which shift you want. The duties will entail monitoring the radiation level and occasionally checking the radio."

It didn't take them long to decide who would take which shift. After that was done, I pulled out the list of supplies we had and we went over them. The single most critical item was diesel fuel for the generator. We could only extend our run time through prudent use of electricity.

I suggested that Elvia, Sharon, Linda and Patti get together and work out menus based on what supplies were available and what people's tastes were. Brenda and Amy would be in charge of keeping the kids quiet and settled down. It was crowded but not to the point of being over crowded. We had all our VHS and DVD movies and a fair share of Ron's. The kids couldn't hog the TV all the time and we did have 2 players and 2 TVs. The combination player was on the big screen and my player on the other TV. We could put one TV in one of the bedrooms, if necessary.

The headcount was as follows: Gary & Sharon (5), Ron and Linda (8), Lance and Elvia (2), Dave (1), Chris and Patti (3) and Dick (1) for a total of 20 souls. The gross shelter square footage was 53'x28' or 1,484ft² giving each person ~74ft². Gender wise, the headcount was: Female (9), Male (11).

The LTS from Walton Feed represent enough food for 10 people for 10 years which translated into a 5 years supply. Ron and Linda's backup generator should have kicked in at some point and should keep their freezer going for a while. In addition to our freezer's contents, we had enough food for the 5 of us for ~6 months. No one was going to starve down here in the shelter. We also had 12 bundles of tp, enough for everyone for a while. After that, we had Kleenex and Cottonelles.

There was a storage room for the food and other items plus a separate generator room. The generator room was 2x6 construction and insulated as well as lined with acoustic tile. It had a double door set up to keep the sound contained in the generator room. It was about 95% efficient.

The radiation eventually peaked at 317R/hr. According to my spreadsheet, we could leave the shelter in 38 days from the time the radiation peaked, April 17, 2008 at 4:15pm.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 8

Friday, May 25, 2008, 4:30pm...

"Ron and I will put on those Tyvek suits and the gas masks and check the radiation levels around the house. Stand by the radio and if it's ok, you're all free to come up."

The first thing I noticed was the fine coating of grit on everything. In a few spots, it was a little hot, above the 100mR/hr level. We were carrying the CD V-715, and wearing CD V-742 dosimeters. Chris had assembled the Kearney meter for something to do. I checked a garden hose and we still had water pressure, we could wash down as required.

"You're clear to come out. The radiation level is about 95mR/hr according to this meter. Watch the dust, some of it is still hot; we're going to need to do a wash down. The women of child bearing age and the kids can come up too, but they'll have to sleep in the shelter for a few more nights. I recommend bringing a firearm, we haven't checked out the neighborhood yet."

We had an assortment of weapons and everyone had at least one firearm. Chris had a shotgun, Lance the M1A and his .357 magnum, Dave a Browning automatic shotgun and Dick a .30-06 Winchester model 70. Ron and I both had the M1As and a .357 magnum. We walked the entire housing tract, seeking out any radiation hot spots and marking them with a can of red spray paint.

"Dick, can you pull your trailer up and block the entrance?"

"I will if the truck starts."

It didn't but Chris's older pickup started just fine. They pulled the trailer to the entrance and parked it across the road. It wasn't quite wide enough so they pushed Dick's truck up to fill the remaining hole.

"Chris, Dick and you can use the Kearney meter and we'll use the one I have. We'll get the other survey meter uninstalled and you can use it. We need to check on Ron's house and pick up parts to repair Dick's truck. That will mean replacing the computer if it has one and putting in new ignition components. You might as well get a new battery while you're at it. Partner, I don't believe either your car or my car will run. We can reallocate a couple of diesel pickups if we can get them to run."

"Steal them?"

"Yeah, but strategic reallocation sounds better. Let's get out of these suits, we don't need them."

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Our wives and daughters brought food up and used the propane stove to cook dinner. They had steaks we could cook on with the gas grill or the charcoal grills. Chris took us to Ron's to check on his house, it was fine, and then to the auto mall where they looked for parts for Dick's pickup while Ron and I shopped the used pickups, looking for older diesels. Everything ended up with a new battery and tires plus a tank full of fuel to which I added PRI-D. We swung by AmeriGas, but there was no one there. Ron left his pickup and took a delivery truck to his house to fill his propane tank. When he was done, we left the delivery truck sit and I drove him back to AmeriGas to get his pickup. He had written a note that he taped on the door, explaining to his friend where the delivery truck was. While we were gone, they hoisted all of the animals out of the shelter and let them run in the backyard.

Someone had placed a fan in the shelter entrance sucking out the air (stink) and hopefully making it smell a bit better. We stayed away from the City Hall area and the Sheriff's station, at this point in time, there was no sense looking for trouble, it was bound to find us. Very few, if any, homes in the Antelope Valley have basements. About the only underground facilities were in government buildings and some of the hotel/motels.

Back in the tract, it took Dick and Chris about an hour to get Dick's pickup running. It was gasoline fueled and I told him I had 24 drums of stabilized gas. Dave Lucky's truck blew its engine in January and he had rebuilt the engine. It was old and only need a battery plus ignition parts to run. That gave everyone but Lance wheels and I told him I'd take him to the auto mall the next day to find a useable pickup. I used a stick to check the level of my diesel tank, I'd need fuel soon. Lance had provided Dave with an extension cord to keep his refrigerator going and I told Dave to take the PowerBOSS to use.

Only Brenda, Cody and their kids plus Amy's kids were planning on sleeping in the shelter that night. Lorrie and David had spent the 5½ weeks in the Library basement. While we didn't have any empty bunks, we did have several folding cots they could have used. They showed up just before we sat down to eat dinner and I believe I saw a few tears of joy.

Over dinner, it was decided that we'd all take the same shifts on the entrance that we'd used in the shelter. During our walk through the housing tract, we hadn't found any other residents, alive. However, several cars were missing and maybe they went somewhere else to shelter. Since some of us didn't know all the residents, a second person would be on call to assist if anyone showed up. KTPI was back on the air and a dusk to dawn curfew was in effect, we shouldn't have anyone show up during the night.

When I took over for Ron at midnight, he said a Sheriff's cruiser has passed by about once an hour but hadn't stopped. About halfway through my shift, a patrol car pulled up and stopped.

"Help you?"

"How many people are there still here?"

"Twenty-five."

"All residents?"

"All residents or guests. My buddy lives on Sweetbrush Street, but they stayed with us because I have a shelter."

"Can we get the names?"

"I can give you what I have; there are a couple of last names I don't know."

I then ran through the names and relationships. I didn't know Brenda's married name or Lance's last name, but I was able to give addresses. I explained that we'd have an armed guard on the entrance 24/7. They then wanted to know what we were using for communications and I told them ham radio, CB and business radios. They told me they could be reached on CB channel 9. We'd have to get Ron's CB radios, all I had was a base station, with SSB. Ron had about 6 or 7, all 40 channel w/o SSB. When we could do it, we'd have to get into a Radio Shack and pick up several of the FRS/GMRS radios.

According to KTPI all of the major airports in the LA region had been hit by weapons that varied in size. They even nuked El Toro, the closed Marine base. They took out LAX (Los Angeles), ONT (Ontario), BUR (Burbank), LGB (Long Beach), VNY (Van Nuys) and SNA (John Wayne). The only one they missed was PMD, thank God! The downside was planes flying aid to Los Angeles landed either in Palmdale or on one of the dry lakebeds, Rogers or Rosamond. It didn't take long before Palmdale was overrun with troops; there went our midnight auto supply business and scavenging in general. The last thing we salvaged was a pickup for Lance and a load of diesel fuel.

I, for one, had always counted on filling in the empty spots using salvage. We were quite pleasantly surprised to learn how many people had managed to avoid the bird flu and survive the attacks. Of all the municipal services, the only one still up and running was the water service. The phones were down, Time-Warner's electronics were shot, a gas pipeline was closed somewhere before it got to the Antelope Valley and Edison couldn't deliver electricity. Man, were we lucky to still have water. The Palmdale Water District had its own power of course, that huge 950kw wind turbine. They also had an experimental solar array capable of producing 30kw.

We parked the diesel tanker at the east end of Moonraker Road. Since Ron had several propane refills and they had a 20kw generator, they returned home when the radiation level reached 50mR/hr about a week later. I suppose we should have thought to look through the empty houses to see what we could find. I didn't, but I can't speak for the others. I willingly took my share of firewood the others found and redistributed and as we burned through the propane bottles, we went to Ron and he refilled them.

Having 20 people in the shelter for 38 days had its downside, we did use a lot of, you guessed it, toilet paper. After we had words, Sharon had increased our supply from 5 bundles to 10. When we had the shelter constructed, that went up to 15 bundles. During the nine days between my premonition and the start of the war, she added 5 more bundles plus extra pasta, beans, rice and things we didn't usually have like powdered milk. Yes, there was some of the latter in the Walton Feed supplies, but not enough according to her. I don't like milk and the only time I have any is with cereal or as an ingredient in something she cooks.

Ron and I discussed the possibility of running up to MCLB, Barstow. In light of the increasing number of troops in the area, we wisely decided against that. It was probably one of our better decisions, not long after, KTPI carried a story about the area residents who had tried that. They won't be doing any more strategic reallocation.

Dick converted our hot water heater and furnace plus the new kitchen stove to propane and we got some of the large residential (100#) bottles and he plumbed them into our gas lines. Between the diesel generator providing electricity and the bottled gas, we were doing very well, thanks for asking. It wasn't long before we finally used up the flour and opened a pail of wheat to make our own using our Country Living grain mill. It took getting used to, but we managed.

About 6 weeks into the day after, Dubya issued a message carried by the radio stations. In it he announced that the initial supplies of bird flu vaccine were being manufactured and soon would be available. He also indicated that, given the scope of the damage, FEMA was overwhelmed and it would be necessary for the military and National Guard to fill in for them. The best the government could do at the moment was to issue surplus commodities. He said that, again given the scope of damage, there weren't enough MREs in the whole world to feed the country.

It was interesting what he didn't say. He didn't mention the war in Iraq or Afghanistan. He didn't utter a single word about the status of our Navy. He talked about restoring the country to its former role in world society and a bunch of nonsense like that. And, while he talked, I was thinking that they couldn't even get Yucca Mountain opened and there'd be enough waste now to bury the state of Nevada. In the end, the government usually does what it wants to do, regardless of the consequences. If there was any good news at all, it might have been that Divine Strake had been postponed indefinitely.

Whoever attacked us hit us where it hurts; many of their attacks were focused on air hubs and airports big enough to handle the large jets like the C-5, 747, 777 and 787. Even if you were dumb enough to fly an aircraft into a destroyed large city, you couldn't find a place to land. That said, we had so many large airports, they couldn't destroy them all. To get on that list, an airport had to have at least 10,000 passenger boardings a year.

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It wasn't long after that, that third flu wave hit. It seems like if you got it, it killed you. Most of us had been exposed because Ron had actually gotten the flu and between the Tamiflu and our immune systems, we sort of developed a small amount of immunity. Having the housing tract sealed off because of the war hadn't hurt either. Every person who took a turn staffing the roadblock wore a mask.

As it turned out, Lance became the man in charge; he was the Green Beret Officer and had the leadership skills. Eventually, the LA County Sheriff sent a group of deputies in and they checked out all of the housing. They removed any bodies they found and informed us that the empty housing would be put to use housing refugees. We objected, citing the reemergence of the flu and lack of electricity and other utilities.

We held out and eventually, they installed a very large propane tank on the other side of the wall to feed gas to the houses. Someone converted all of the appliances to burn propane and then they brought in several mobile diesel generators, just enough to power the entire housing tract.

It was, at best, an uneasy time until we got to know the new families. Those of us who represented original residents, there were only five remaining homes, ideally represented Californian attitudes, we all had 6' high fences to hide behind. We were, in some respects, the clique to end all cliques.

"Gar-Bear, you got your ears on?"

"Yeah, they're attached."

"What's that noise in the background?"

"The LA Country Sheriff and the Army bought in some diesel generators to supply the housing tract with electricity."

"You need more propane?"

"We could stand to top off a few bottles, but they plumbed propane in to supply the entire housing tract. They finally showed up and picked up the trash, too. What's happening in your neighborhood?"

"Probably about the same. Did you negotiate to get more Tamiflu?"

"Amy got enough from her job to resupply all of us. They filled the houses with refugees."

"What have you been doing?"

"We went door to door and took down the information on each new family and issued ID cards so we know who belonged and who didn't."

"How are you doing on food?"

"We have plenty, need some?"

"As a matter of fact, we do. Could you spare any of that LTS food you have?"

"Sure, why not? Can you take the propane bottles and fill them?"

"I'll see what I can do."

"Are you ready to give back my rifle?"

"Yeah, but let's not talk about that on the air, little pitchers have big ears."

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Ron showed a little while later and I met him at the roadblock. I'd made him an ID card but needed 2 pictures, one for the card itself and one for the duplicate we kept in the index card file. We were using one of those Polaroid cameras that took 2 passport photos that we'd managed to reallocate from somewhere. The California State Military Reserve took over for the County Sheriff, the town was filling up with refugees and we didn't have that many Deputies. They're just volunteers who had some military experience, hopefully. Their official name was the California State Military Reserve. This bunch was mostly MPs and operated under the Governor's authority.

Our worst nightmare had always been people coming to the high desert after a major earthquake. We expected broken bones and typical earthquake injuries, not radiation sickness. There wasn't much we could do except to try and keep the people who didn't belong out of the housing tract.

"How high's the water, papa?"

"About 500,000' and rising, Gar-Bear. They moved a bunch into our neighborhood too. I don't mind helping people, but this bunch acts like we owe them something. Damned glad I have that barbed wire fence, it puts them off some. How about you?"

"I think they got to us first because we had that roadblock set up. That night they stopped and talked to me while you were still living here sort of opened a flood gate. I'm glad I got my diesel tank topped off when I did, they grabbed the tanker. You still have the propane delivery truck?"

"Nope. My friend at AmeriGas set me up with a second 550-gallon tank and I got that and all of my bottles filled before they grabbed it. I'm sorry, but there nothing I can do to fill any bottles for you."

"I thought the truck looked familiar, they used it to fill the tank for the housing tract. How long can you get by on the propane you have?"

"That depends on whether or not they bring in generators for our neighborhood. Counting my two tanks and all of my bottles, 3-4 months. If they provide power, we can get by for several years on that propane. You said you could let me have some food and I remembered to bring back your rifle. I like it well enough, but it's an attention getter and we don't need that."

"Sharon has been at it a while and ground you a pail of flour. Did Linda give you a shopping list or tell you to get all you could?"

"We have meat; we need staples and a couple of bundles of toilet paper. That bunch of MPs said they'd have stuff for us as soon as they had it all sorted out. I brought back your ammo and chest harness too, but to tell you the truth, I sure wish you'd have gotten me more of those 30 round magazines for my SU-16."

"Say something to Sandy, she may have some put up somewhere that she'd let you have. Standard load out is only 210 rounds and you have 170 as it is."

"You heard from your boys?"

"We don't have phones back and I haven't picked up anything on the radio, which is a long way of saying no."

"Who do you figure will show up first?"

"Derek is probably closer than Damon. It a long way for either one of them and there's almost no way they can avoid major cities. Damon probably doesn't have the money to come and Derek may be tied up with Arkansas National Guard. In distances, it's 1,618 miles from Flippin v. 1,789 miles from Britt."

"How are they getting by?"

"Damon could have gone to Ames to be with his uncle Jerry. Both of Mary's parents live in Flippin. I talked to Derek before the Pandemic got bad and they were going to buy some food and tuck in. I couldn't reach Damon and Derek said he'd call him."

"Did Lorrie and David go back home?"

"Yeah, but they took a load of food with them. Let's get down to the shelter and sort out what you need. Did you ever get your car to run?"

"Couldn't get the parts. It needs a new computer and all sorts of parts. I been getting by with the used pickup we borrowed."

"Me too, but I haven't gone anywhere. Lance is running the security for the tract and I just pull duty when I'm assigned. Frankly, I'm glad he's doing it; there was an undercurrent of resentment that I had a shelter and they didn't. I can't understand that, I didn't run roughshod over anyone when we were in the shelter."

"It's was probably that *this is not a democracy* statement you made. Don't worry about it, we all owe you big time."

"You came through for me when I needed gas drums, we're about even."

"That's what friends are for."

"Remember to soak beans overnight to avoid gas."

"I don't really like chili the way you do, I get terrible indigestion."

"Want some Nexium? You could take some of Linda's Prevacid, it's the same thing. If that doesn't do it, take some Pepcid AC or Maalox. I have 2 bottles of Pepcid Complete you are welcome to, I don't like it. The thing that gets me is greasy food. Need coffee?"

"How many cans do you have left?"

"Enough or I wouldn't have offered. Keep your eye peeled for Kool's 100s; I'd hate to quit smoking just because I ran outta smokes. Have you heard how long these people are going to be here?"

"With all the weapons detonated in the LA area, several years. You ain't in Kansas anymore Gar-Bear."

"Iowa, not Kansas, but I get the point. Do you think society will really regress 100 years?"

"Given our age, that won't matter much will it? I heard someone say that they wouldn't rebuild the freeways. Apparently the plan is to replace them with trains. It's going to take years before they're manufacturing cars like they were before and it was suggested that this might be an ideal time to change from hydrocarbons to something else, like electricity. Unless they come up with a way to improve crop yields, biofuels like diesel and ethanol won't be practical."

"I suppose that they closed down of the nuclear reactors too, it could be a while before the lights are back on."

"Don't know, Gar, but we can't count on hydroelectric to the meet our needs. Maybe they'll come up with a way to clean and gasify coal. I saw a show on TV that said there's enough frozen methane under the oceans to meet our power needs for years."

"I saw that too, they haven't found a practical way to harvest it. We might want to consider going to lower powered means of transportation, like maybe a one horsepower vehicle."

"Horses aren't very efficient; it would take you a day to get to LA."

"Now why would I want to go to LA? That would be like going out the frying pan and into the fire. What they outta do is bulldoze the town and find a different place to build a city. I'd love to go back home, but we have too much invested in this place. Besides, it's about as secure as anyplace in Palmdale. We have only had to run off a couple of people we caught coming in over the fence and either the Guard, California State Military Reserve or Sheriff makes a pass about every 30 minutes. When we called them on channel 9, there was someone here in minutes."

"You called the cops? Why do that? Why not just shoot, shovel and shut up?"

"Cause Amy works for the Sheriff, that's why. That's proven to be a blessing, we've been getting Tamiflu, enough fuel for her to drive to work and they run extra patrols by here. Besides, I only have one throw down, the Sterling .22. I figured I'd better save that for something really important. You got all you need?"

"Yep."

"Don't forget to look for some smokes for me, Kool's 100's."

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"Gary, didn't you tell me your son was in the National Guard?"

"Yes, Lance, I did. He ended up in an artillery Company not too far from where he lives. However, he's had a whole lot of MP training; they did that for Kosovo and again for Iraq. That's what he did in Iraq when he was over there; provide security for convoys and a certain group of people."

"You think he'll show up?"

"I have no idea, I wish he would. He could bring his brother, I suspect that Damon headed for Flippin when TSHTF."

"That's good."

"That's bad, Mary can't stand Damon. He stayed with them after his mother died and wore out his welcome. I've got 2 sons and their families halfway across the country. They hit Springfield, Missouri and Little Rock, Arkansas, plus Ft. Smith. They'd have to thread a needle to get here through that radiation. I bought the extra M1A rifle in hopes that Derek would show up, man, can he shoot."

"Neither Erica or Joseph have shown up and they only had to come from LA."

"I wouldn't give hope yet, there are more people showing up every day. How old is her baby?"

"About a year old. Joseph's wife is expecting. Elvia hopes maybe they went to her folks, they have a basement."

"You're talking about Elvia parents?"

"Yes. It's an older home but it has a basement. Both kids would know to go there if they could. I wanted to drive down to LA and check on them, but the Sheriff said no. You can't go towards the city without a permit; they're trying to make it easy on the refugees coming here."

"This town is filled to overflowing. There isn't that much free housing Lancaster is there?"

"Apparently we were lucky, you had the shelter and we were on your invitation list. I understand that most of the people in the tract tried to get to City Hall, but it filled up and they were left outside. Ended up with a lethal dose of radiation. Once the Sheriff identified the bodies and checked the tract, the Chief Deputy decided to use the empty houses for refugees."

"I almost didn't have a shelter, Lance. I got a wild hair and refinanced the house at a higher interest rate and pulled out a chunk of our equity. That paid for the shelter and the equipment plus some of the extras. I don't know that I like the stuff we got from Walton Feed, but it beats going hungry. Besides wheat keeps longer than flour so we just grind one pail of wheat at a time."

"You might be better off than you know, where was the company located that financed the house?"

"Downtown LA. Say, you don't suppose that all the records are gone do you?"

"It would depend on whether they got around to recording their lien or just held the title. You could check later and if the lien isn't recorded, try to get a duplicate title."

"We haven't received any disability payments and all the other payments go into the Iowa account. At the moment, about all the money we have is whatever cash we had when the attack came."

"You've been giving the food away, why don't you charge what you paid for it? Elvia and I would be more than happy to pay."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 9

"Most of the people aren't working and don't have any money. I'm just sharing it with the people who know we have it, those of you who were in the shelter with us. Anyway, we've gotten some additional food, the commodities being distributed by the government people. But if you want to pay, I'll dig out the catalog on my computer and show you what the stuff cost. We rented a U-Haul truck and went after the stuff, so the freight amounts to what we paid for the truck. Altogether, it ran about \$1,000 for each one year supply of food."

"Do that. I know for a fact that Dave and Dick have the ability to pay you too. Chris has been out of work for a while, I don't know about him."

"Unless something has changed, he keeps his racing money separate from the household accounts. It's been a while since I was involved in his racing team so I don't know about now. He contributed the radios we use, or part of them, I may or may not ask him, I haven't decided."

For that matter, we'd all contributed something, Dick converted gas appliances to run on propane and Chris provided the racing radios. I provided shelter and some food and Dave did some machine work for me. I had drawings of what I wanted and the catalog of the retail items on my computer, he took it from there. He called it an improved flash-hider. Fair enough, it did do that. It didn't silence the sound of the South African surplus much, but it did what it was supposed to do. A silencer does not make a rifleman silent, but it does make him invisible. The patented Fast Attach mount that Surefire used was duplicated, making for fast removal. They won't complain, they got nuked.

Eventually, Erica and her hubby showed up with the baby, Joseph and his wife and Elvia's parents. They had to walk most of the way and looked like they had been pulled through a knothole backwards. I gave Lance the camera and told him to make up their IDs and I'd laminate them. There was enough room in their house for 4 families for a while at least.

Dave checked and his girls were ok, they were still living with his ex-wife Dana. They'd been home when the balloon went up and their apartment complex had an underground area that doubled, in this case, as a shelter. Matt and his girlfriend showed up a few days later just to assure Chris and Patti they were ok. They didn't stay long; they had to get back to Mojave. Sharon's sister Shirley was in Des Moines and we hadn't heard from her or her sister Charlene who lived in California City.

How many years had it been since the government issued commodities? The follow on had been the food stamp program which had replaced the commodity program in the '70s. Some vestiges of the program must have been continued, maybe for school lunches. I'd take commodities over MREs any day.

Everyone was now accounted for except Damon and Derek, one wife and 7 kids.

OMAHA, Neb. - Stocking up on food is as simple as a trip to the grocery store, a veritable land of plenty for Americans.

"It's so easy when you have three grocery stores in your vicinity," said Becky Jones of Omaha, who stocks up once a week for her family of three. "You think: how could you possibly not get what you needed?"

But will fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, bread, milk and other household staples still be available if the US is hit with an anticipated bird flu pandemic? If state and federal officials urge people to stay away from public places, like restaurants and fast-food establishments, will they be able to get the groceries they need to prepare food in their homes?

For Jones, the prospect of not having access to food is frightening. She said most people, her included, only have food on hand for three or four days.

Unlike other critical infrastructure sectors like water, energy and health care, the food industry isn't getting much help from state and federal governments when it comes to disaster planning. That puts the burden on individual supermarket chains and wholesalers to deal with a potentially large number of sick workers that could affect store operations and disrupt the food supply.

"The industry is actively thinking through contingency plans, so if it should happen, our members would be well prepared to deal with it," said Tim Hammonds, president of the Food Marketing Institute, an advocate for grocery wholesalers and retail supermarkets nationwide.

The US Department of Health and Human Services Top estimates a third of the population could fall ill if the H5N1 strain of the bird flu mutates into a form that spreads easily from person to person. It's not clear if that will ever happen and no human cases of bird flu have ever been traced to eating properly cooked poultry or eggs.

But if a pandemic emerges, the Department of Homeland Security projects worker absenteeism to reach 40 percent or more over a prolonged period. Hammonds said retail food stores would have to contend with worker shortages and disruptions in the supply chain.

The food and agriculture industry is listed among 13 critical-infrastructure sectors that the Department of Homeland Security says must remain functional during a pandemic.

"Having those critical facilities open – like power, water, food – becomes very important" during a national disaster such as a pandemic, said Keith Hanson, an outreach coordinator for Nebraska's Center for Biopreparedness Education.

Hanson works with local businesses, helping test their preparedness plans. He will speak about the importance of that testing at the Public Health Preparedness Summit in Washington, an annual conference designed to help public health workers prepare for emergencies. This year's meeting started Friday and ends Feb. 23.

Hanson said continued operations of power and water utilities are of the utmost importance, but grocery stores rank highly too. That's because people today keep less food on hand, opting instead to make weekly trips to the grocery store.

Americans are also dining out more than they have in the past. Money spent on food prepared outside the home rose from 34 percent of total food costs in 1974 to about 50 percent in 2004, according to a report by the US Department of Agriculture.

The Food Marketing Institute's Hammonds said a widespread pandemic will likely cause food consumption to shift away from restaurants and fast-food establishments and toward in-home eating, causing a greater demand for groceries.

"That means stores would need to be prepared for an increase in volume," he said.

Hy-Vee, a West Des Moines, Iowa-based supermarket chain that operates more than 200 stores in the Midwest, does not have a disaster plan developed in the event of avian flu. But company spokeswoman Chris Friesleben said the company keeps abreast of the illness through the Food Marketing Institute.

"The food supply is essential to the well-being of the community," said Hammonds. "We've been through a lot about what we need to do as a supermarket."

That includes urging wholesalers and retailers to talk with their suppliers about alternative sources for their products and to anticipate what products will be in high demand in a pandemic situation, such as medicines and food staples.

Stephanie Childs, a spokeswoman for Omaha-based ConAgra Foods Inc., said a company task force was formed more than a year ago to develop an operating plan in the event of a national disaster. The plan specifically addresses bird flu, examines areas that could be affected and how the company could respond, she said.

ConAgra is one of the nation's largest food companies, with brand names that include ACT II popcorn, Banquet, Chef Boyardee, Marie Callender's, Egg Beaters and Orville Redenbacher's.

The company employs about 27,000 people, but Homeland Insecurity projections indicate that number could fall to 16,200 during a pandemic.

Childs said such worker shortages and difficulties with suppliers getting their products to ConAgra plants were among the potential problems the company identified. She did not disclose how the company would address those issues.

The federal government and public health agencies are urging people to stock up on nonperishable food, like canned goods and dried fruit, to ensure they have food to eat during a pandemic.

Jones, the Omaha woman, said that's a proactive approach, but was worried that people with limited incomes may not be able to afford a large stockpile of food.

She stopped short of calling for the government to oversee the food industry's pandemic planning, but said, "If they see a crisis that is on the horizon, they do have to give us some type of warning."

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I once wrote a story titled, *The Cold War*. In it, I claimed that the Cold War never ended, it just changed character. Even a blind man could see it coming, Russia and China had been building their forces; both backed Iran and were highly critical of our best buddy, Israel. I've explained why we have this relationship with Israel; it has to do with Jewish demographics.

I guess I knew that we were running out of time when we refinanced the house strictly for the purpose of getting money to build that shelter underneath the backyard. Timing wise, contractors hadn't started their big building programs and they were just hungry enough to give us a little break on pricing. Still, what with all we bought, we burned through the funds easily enough. I guess it doesn't matter, when the time came, we were really ready.

Without conscious thought, the five original families had formed what amounted to a Mutual Aid/Response Group. Lance and I tended towards the militant side and Chris and Dave were just the opposite with Dick somewhere in the middle. It made for a well-rounded group. None of us had any CERT training and it had been back in '80s when I had last certified in CPR. There were probably enough collective skills among us to keep someone going until the paramedics arrived. Not that it would help much, LA Country cut way back on the supplies they carried; it was nowhere near what they had on the old TV show *Emergency*.

The character of the individuals involved was reflected in what they had for weapons. Lance and I each has M1A rifles, I had 2, and at least 5,000 rounds of surplus per weapon. Chris had a shotgun and 100 rounds of 00 buck. I was surprised he hadn't bought birdshot instead. I had to give him some of the Brenneke slugs or he wouldn't have had any of those.

One would have thought that the increased police presence would have precluded people trying to break into our housing tract. It might have, at one time; but now, there was a restaurant on the corner and their parking lot went right up to the wall on the east end of Moonraker Road. Wannabe thieves couldn't get in the main entrance, it was too well

guarded. However, that didn't prevent the enterprising wannabe's from climbing that short fence. After the first couple of break-ins, we'd taken my leftover barbed wire that I kept when we replaced the fence and tried to make some homemade concertina. That also proved to be ineffective because wire cutters seemed to abound.

Thus, it came to be that we had to guard both places. We had Joseph and Erica's husband to help now, but that still meant 2 4-hour shifts apiece. Some of the new folks, you could count them on one hand, volunteered to help out. However, they didn't have weapons and most of us weren't willing to let them use ours. Amy volunteered to round out the group, giving us 8 people, or 4 pairs and that cut the shifts to six hours.

We didn't have street lights because they were on a separate circuit and would have required a separate generator. Overall, there was still a generator shortage, plus a fuel shortage. I'm not totally sure, but I think the Army generators were being run on JP-8. They had two types of generators, the Tactical Quiet Generators and the regular generators. The ones provided to our tract must have been left over from WW II, they were anything but quiet. On the other hand, the military provided the fuel.

The military has a system, new, front line gear goes to the active duty and the worn out, retired gear goes to the National Guard. When the National Guard can no longer keep the equipment going, I think they must give or sell it to State Defense Forces. By that time, the reliability of the equipment must be below 50%. In other words, it was still a good thing we had a generator in the shelter. It was also a very good thing that Ronald McDonald had friends at AmeriGas.

Early on we determined it was simply too risky to put in a large garden across Avenue R. Our backyard became our little garden spot and it gave us a garden about the size of the shelter, 35'x55'. Minus a little space around the fill pipe for the diesel tank where they'd spilled diesel fuel. Getting diesel vehicles was a mixed blessing at best, they ran but getting fuel wasn't easy. I'm quite certain that we weren't the only people to borrow used pickups from the dealers either.

We hadn't seen nor heard from Clarence for over a year. The last time I'd talked to him, he'd owned a 12 gauge pump shotgun and a .38 Special Smith & Wesson revolver. His health took a dump on him some time back and he was dealing with a bad heart and diabetes. We'd discussed his medicine and it was completely different from the meds Ron and I took. In fact the only similarity among us was that Linda took Prevacid too.

I got a call to come to the entrance of the tract; there was someone there to see me. I immediately thought it must be the boys, here from Arkansas. I was shocked to see Clarence and he didn't look very well to me. He had a grey pallor, if you can imagine that in a black man. He looked wobbly, like he could collapse any moment.

"Clarence, my God, you made it. Move that truck and let him pull in. Clarence, follow me and we'll go to my house."

"Gar-ree, good to see you. Yeah, I'd better get seated before I fall down."

"Ron, got your ears on?"

"What's up partner?"

"Clarence is here. Get your butt over here. Bring some of your pills, Clarence doesn't look good."

"Park it right there, Clarence; come in take a load off."

"Hi, Sharon, how are you doing?"

"Clarence? How have you been?"

"Good and bad. Got the flu in the first wave of the pandemic and I got lucky, they gave me Tamiflu and I survived, barely. Then, I had another stroke before I got out of AV Hospital. That was mighty close, mighty close."

"Coffee?"

"Please. I haven't had a cup of coffee in months."

"Wife ok, Clarence? How about your sister?"

"They're both fine, better than me."

"Don't believe anything he says Gar-Bear."

"Ron. You look good, didn't get the flu, huh?"

"Had it and got over it about 10 days before the war."

"I was in AV Hospital when the war came; I'd just gotten over the flu and was trying hard to get over another stroke."

"Man, what kind of meds do they have you on? You look like you have one foot in the grave."

"That's part of the problem, I don't have any meds. All I had was what they gave me when I left the hospital and I ran out of them in about 15 days. I had prescriptions but I couldn't get them filled. I don't even have any of my old meds left."

"Clarence, I can give you something for your diabetes and something for your blood pressure," I suggested.

"And I can share my heart meds with you. Gar-Bear will have to look them up in his PDR and make sure there aren't any contraindications or warnings before you take them."

"My stomach has been bothering me for some time."

"What have you used?"

"Maalox until I ran out. That helped a lot."

"I have Maalox, Nexium and Prevacid. You can start with the Maalox and work your way up until you get your stomach settled. Don't have an ulcer do you?"

"I used to, but I don't know."

"I have a bunch of the Nexium and I use Prevacid. It's basically the same thing; maybe you'd better try Nexium. Are you taking any antibiotics?"

"Nope."

"That covers most of the contraindications and warnings. There a danger of an allergic reaction, you aren't allergic to penicillin are you?"

"No way."

"I have some Amaryl and some Actos, did you ever take either one?"

"Nope."

"Wait, you shouldn't take Amaryl, not with a bad heart. Crap it says the same thing about Actos. Wait, the problem seems to be fluid retention, I can give you Dyazide to deal with that and you can try the Actos. If you die, it wasn't a good idea."

"I can ask my doctor, write down the meds and I'll go see him."

"Good idea, Clarence, I'll write down what heart medications I can spare and you can ask him about them. Not a good idea to self-medicate if you're not a professional."

"Good thinking Ron, I'll add my meds to the list and his doctor can pick and choose. Don't you worry Clarence, we'll come up with something."

"Thanks fellas, I figured if it would be anyone who had meds it would be the two of you."

"There's a trick to it Clarence, get all the physician samples you can of the drugs you take and fill your prescriptions besides. Over the course of a year or so, you'll accumu-

late plenty of extra. I built up to a 7 month supply that way and Ronald had to discard outdated drugs. Meanwhile, I'll give you a couple of bottles of Maalox."

It wasn't as carefree as I made it sound, more than once, one of our doctors had managed to prescribe something we were allergic to. Glucophage and I didn't get along at all; it gave me diarrhea, a common complaint. They discontinued it and went to Avandia or Actos, they were basically interchangeable. For a long time, Actos was readily available only to be cut off and Avandia became widely available. Then they came out with Avandaryl and I began taking that instead of Avandia and Amaryl. The 4+4 resulted in an abnormal number of hypoglycemic events and he cut me to the 4+2. Maalox, Mylanta and several antacids are strictly over-the-counter drugs and as long as you comply with the label instructions, you're good to go.

Clarence didn't stay too long, now that he had a list of medicine available to him, he took off to Lancaster to try and see his doctor. Although Sharon and I have several medical problems in common, we didn't take the same medicine. I took Diovan to her Coreg and Altace, for example. I took Zoloft to her Prozac and so on. Apparently her diabetes wasn't bad enough she need to be medicated, but when she was, she used Avandia, thereby exhausting my supply. She could take Glucophage without a problem and did for a while at first.

I knew Clarence would be back to get some of our meds and some of Ron and/or Linda's meds. It was nice to have The Three Amigos back together, but we weren't really back together, yet. Clarence looked worse than I felt; I felt awful. Of the 3 of us, Ron was doing the best and medically, he was worse off than Clarence and I combined. I wasn't that old, either, only 65. Add 1 to get Clarence's age and 2 to get Ron's.

He was right in talking to his doctor before taking what we took. It's like those drug commercials were when we still had TV, 20 seconds of telling you why you should take it and 40 seconds telling you why you shouldn't. *Be sure and tell your doctor the medications, you're taking.* Why, he prescribed them; what are you doing going shopping for a doctor who might write an Rx for the latest and greatest? Most of those prostate drugs are nothing more than female hormones. That's why they warn you of breast enlargement. Then there's the drug they advertised that females shouldn't even touch, for fear of birth defects.

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Yep, Clarence looked like chit, I felt like chit and Ron was busy working deals with his friends at AmeriGas. I got the graveyard shift watching the east end, I had trouble getting to sleep at night. It was okay, I had night vision, an AN/PVS-14. This was California; you couldn't have one of those here. However, the .416 Barrett was legal, go figure. Unfortunately, it was only available in the model 99 rifle, a single shot. The .416 used a slug almost as big and shot flatter, good rifle, if you were Bill Gates or Paul Allen.

Arnold lied, he never did come back. They had a vaccine for the bird flu now, but there was a pecking order. You knew that would happen, or am I wrong? It went to the military, people maintaining the critical infrastructure and slowly worked its way down to the masses. If there was any good news, it was that they wouldn't need as many doses, now. People had either succumbed to the bird flu or WW III. Remember, bad things happen in 3s. Clarence was back the following day and his doctor had circled the meds he could take.

"Gar-ree, I saw the doctor, you have some medications I can take."

"Did you get any doctor's samples?"

"He said he was fresh out."

"That's a shame, it's not like you can run to Wal-Mart. Let me see your list, I'll give you what I can and we'll call Ron and have him bring the rest. Say, you want the barrel on that shotgun shortened?"

"Not really, that's my hunting barrel."

"What do you have in the way of shotgun ammo?"

"Number 6 shot, 2 boxes."

"That's it?"

"Yep."

"Winchester model 12?"

"You know it."

"The only person I know who has barrels for every Winchester shotgun ever manufactured is Jack First. He sold out and moved to Rapid City, SD."

"How's that help?"

"Maybe the fella that bought him out has a barrel for a model 12. If we could get you a barrel, my neighbor could cut it to any length, crown it and apply some cold bluing."

"I don't have that kind of money, assuming we could talk him into selling me a barrel. You do know that there's an embargo on the sale of all firearms and ammunition, don't you?"

"I heard, yeah. A barrel isn't a firearm or ammunition; maybe we could find a loophole."

I called Ron and read him the list of meds Clarence needed, he said he'd be here in 20 minutes. Once we got the meds sorted out, the subject of a barrel for Clarence shotgun can up. Ron suggested we let him look into it and he'd let me know. He said he had an idea. He also said he'd check for some .38 Special ammo.

I went through my shotgun shells and gave Clarence a box of the Brenneke slugs and a box of 15 pellet 00 buck. We sat and talked, getting ourselves up to date. Twenty some years before, Clarence had moved to California at the behest of the Sheriff in Birmingham, AL. It was one of those, *Get outta Dodge before sundown'* sorta suggestions. Like the character in Mayberry RFD, Clarence had his own cell in the Jefferson County jail.

o

"You know where Clarence lives?"

"I have his address on my computer, why?"

"I got him 5 boxes of .38 Special and a barrel. It will have to be cut down, but it will give him a defensive shotgun."

"Bring me the barrel Ron and I'll ask Dave to cut it down to 20". When it's ready, you and I can go looking for Clarence."

"It would sure be nice if they'd get the phones up."

"I'd guess all those electronic switches got fried, I wouldn't count on getting phones back anytime soon."

"Then how come the radios work?"

"You know what a Faraday Cage is?"

"Can you explain that?"

"They were all locked up in a grounded metal cabinet; they were shielded from the EMP."

Long story short, Ron brought the barrel and Dave had it cut and crowned in less than an hour. He dabbed on some cold blue to keep the metal from rusting and returned the barrel. I don't know why he had a bottle of cold bluing solution. I gave him 25 rounds of slugs and 25 rounds of buckshot for his trouble. Ron and I tracked down Clarence and gave him his new barrel, he was very moved. You see, that's what friends are for. When you back's to the wall, your good works come back to reward you.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 10

Don't get the impression that The Three Amigos were reunited, we weren't, yet. I did manage to come up with a Motorola CM300, however and we now had Clarence in the loop. As far as our MAG went, it still consisted of the same 5 families, expanded slightly by the addition of Elvia's kids. While it may sound like we went on a spending spree when we got the money from the new mortgage on the house; that was far from the truth. I did indulge myself a little with a few extra weapons and extra ammo, in fact, I was just getting up to the level I'd recommended everyone have. The only thing that was a true indulgence was the Vaqueros and Winchester rifle and the matching leather. And no, I didn't get cowboy loads.

Most noticeably, I didn't have a really high powered rifle, like a Barrett M82A1. By the time you got the rifle, a pair of scopes and ammo, you had about the price of a new car tied up in a single weapon system. Plus, I couldn't manage to carry so heavy a rifle and Raufoss was military only. I'd have settled for a couple cases of LAWs rockets and a couple cases of M67 hand grenades, but half of Camp Pendleton had been moved to the MCLB, Barstow. I wouldn't have minded have a couple of cases of white smoke either, same problem.

The Army and Marine Corps had developed what they call a *city in a box*; the Force Provider (FP) is a combat multiplier being used as a forward deployed system that increases combat capabilities by providing superior living conditions beyond that ever experienced by soldiers. They had commandeered all of the athletic fields and the baseball stadium in Lancaster and were still far short of providing for the number of refugees streaming NE out of LA. They were everywhere: city parks, stadiums and even open fields. The Force Provider Company consisted of 6 Platoons, each capable of setting up facilities for ~550 people, and combined about a Brigade.

Still, they had run out of room and had requisitioned all the large tents available in the area. We had a lot, because of the Palmdale Fall Festival and a similar event held in the largest Lancaster city park. It could best be described as a Chinese Fire Drill. It wasn't like we hadn't been warned, first 9/11 and later hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Three years later, we'd still been totally unprepared for a disaster of any magnitude. And we had 2, not 1, the bird flu followed by the war.

Not knowing about my boys and their families only served to deepen my depression. On top of all our problems, the types of disease that usually rear their ugly heads in times like these were significant. As children, we're vaccinated for a whole series of illnesses. Those vaccinations are generally only good for about 10 years. How many of us, as adults, had gone to the doctor and been re-immunized or had booster shots? Yeah I thought so, very few. I'd had a rather unpleasant argument with Dr. J, he'd relented and we were protected, for everything except smallpox, yellow fever and the bird flu from a clinic offering the shots.

After initial immunization, a booster injection or Booster dose is essentially a re-exposure to the immunizing antigen. It is intended to increase your immunity against that antigen back to protective levels after it has been shown to have decreased or after a specified period of time (eg tetanus shot boosters every 10 years).

If you receive a booster and already have high antibody titers you may develop a reaction called an Arthus reaction, a localized form of Type III hypersensitivity, induced by fixation of complement by preformed circulating antibodies. In severe cases, the degree of complement fixation can be so substantial that it induces local tissue necrosis.

In our cases, many of those vaccines had been developed after we were children and we hadn't had them. Better safe than sorry, but you should discuss it with your doctor. I know I had the pneumonia shot, but no tetanus booster in over 10 years. I told my doctor to imagine me as traveling to a country with the worst set of diseases and he chose selectively. I've had both German measles, regular measles and mumps. I also had Hepatitis A. Because of my age and illnesses, I'm classified as being at high risk.

o

I'll admit I was giving serious consideration to going and looking for my boys when they finally showed up. I knew I had to do something, I'm all too familiar with the effects of depression, I'd had it, in some form, since age 5. I'd started out with dysthymic disorder and evolved into MDD.

"What took you so long?"

"We had to wait out the radioactive decay, and then find something that ran and enough fuel to get here, Dad. Can you get us a motel room?"

"Not hardly, you can stay in the shelter for now."

"What shelter?"

"That's right, you didn't know about that did you? I was about to set out and look for you. You got Tamiflu?"

"Don't need it, we've been vaccinated."

"Damon too?"

"Me too."

"How about a quick sitrep?"

"You first."

"We haven't been vaccinated for the bird flu, but have taken Tamiflu on one occasion. I have an M1A for you and plenty of ammo. I can give Damon a shotgun and each of you an M1911; or, one of you a .357 and the other an M1911. Our communications are limited to ham radio, CB and business radio. We're well stocked on food and have some meds. Because the major LA airports were taken out, Palmdale is overrun with National Guard and the State Military Reserves. More importantly, we've picked up over ½ million refugees from LA."

After we got them all settled in (in the shelter) we had a fried chicken dinner. We talked late into the night, he knew more of what the situation was across the country and it wasn't good. The Bird Flu was winding down, assisted by the new vaccine that was in early stages of distribution. He'd gotten his old Blazer rebuilt and located enough fuel to make the drive. They'd started out with a nominal amount of food, but picked up more along the way. They'd had to skirt several large cities due to the fallout. In addition to their .30-30 and 9mm pistol, he come up with 2 M16A2s, magazines, ammo, and a pair of M9s with magazines and ammo.

Damon had ended up with the old .30-30 and their 9mm pistol. All three of them were dressed in BDUs and the kids in jeans and flannel shirts. He said that he had some surprises for me, but they were buried under the stuff in the Blazer. After an evening of welcome conversation, we all turned in and that was the best night's sleep I'd had since the Pandemic began.

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After breakfast the next morning, I gave Damon the shotgun, 25 rounds of slugs and 75 rounds of 15 pellet 00 buck. Derek got the newer Loaded. I decided not to give them the M1911s, they were happy with what they had. We began to unload the Blazer and low and behold, be still my heart. There was one each M82A1 equipped with a Gem-tech STORMFRONT suppressor. There were 1,200 rounds of Raufoss and 1,200 rounds of Hornady A-MAX match.

Designed specifically for the .50 caliber Barrett models 82 and M107 rifles, the STORMFRONT featured a 2-point mounting system for increased stability and safety. It had redundant safety features while retaining a light weight. Flash and visual (dust) signature was almost completely done away with. The STORMFRONT reduced sound levels more than 10 decibels below the bullet flight noise. At the shooter's ear, it meets the European requirements for shooting without hearing protection.

He then handed me a case, saying, "Courtesy of the US Navy."

The Pelican case held an Mk-15 (Tac-50) complete with 10 magazines, sling, Nightforce NXS 12-42x56mm scope, McCann night vision rail and an AN/PVS-27 Magnum Universal Night Sight.

He could have stopped there, but he didn't, he produced 2 full cases of LAWs rockets, 30 units. He also produced two cartons (30 per) of M67 grenades and 2 cases of M403 HE rounds for the M203s. To this he added ten cans of Mk 211 MP and 12 cases of 750gr Hornady A-MAX Match. He had divided the .50 caliber equally between him and me.

After lunch, I took them around and introduced them to the other members of the MAG. We gave Lance 3 LAWS and 6 grenades. Derek complimented Dave on his improved flashhiders and we moved on to Dick's. It turned out that Dick had been in the Army, too. He was familiar with the LAW and the M67. We gave him 2 rockets and 4 grenades. After we'd done the introductions to Chris and Patti, we returned home and I called Ron and Clarence, telling them I had a surprise for them.

Ron gave me hell because I hadn't called him when Derek was out over Christmas, 2006. Because I knew that Ron weren't in the military, I didn't mention the LAWs or M67s. They showed up one by one, and Clarence looked a little better, not much, it was a start. I introduced them to my sons and Mary. I had Derek show Ron his new rifle, illegal as all get out and as heavy as a tank. We hadn't set out to be outlaws, but with all that had happened, we had succeeded. We might continue to get away with it up until we used the heavy weapons, who knows?

I then rubbed it in by showing Ron my new rifle. How many artillery units that you know of have a sniper assigned? I hadn't noticed the 5th stripe, he'd made Sergeant First Class. He also showed us a stack of military orders saying he was on detached duty.

He went on to say they'd been perfectly safe in the Bull Shoals area, but he was worried about us. Then Damon showed up and Mary began to urge him to work it out so they could come to California where they could dump Damon and hang out a while before returning home, without Damon. Damon's side of the story was that Mutt took off with the kids and when he couldn't locate them, he headed to Arkansas.

Later, I got Derek to sit down with me and go over the Code of Conduct and the Army's General orders for sentries.

Code of Conduct:

Article I

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

Article II

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

Article III

If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Article IV

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

Article V

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

Article VI

I will never forget that I am an American fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

Army's General Orders for Sentries:

1. I will guard everything within the limits of my post and quit my post only when properly relieved.
2. I will obey my special orders and perform all of my duties in a military manner.
3. I will report violations of my special orders, emergencies, and anything not covered in my instructions to the commander of the relief.

I told him my General Orders were far simpler, shoot first and ask questions later. I also suggested he get with Lance and work something out, Lance didn't have a second in command and I thought he should apply. Not that we expected any trouble, of course.

One advantage of our little ID card program was we collected a fair amount of information on our new neighbors. When I had the chance, I mentioned to Amy that the 3 families living next door were illegals. She should mention that to her boss and see if they were interested in removing them from our housing tract. The Deputies and state Military Reserve soon showed up in the middle of the night kicked in the door and hauled them off. Derek and Mary moved in the next day. Patti kicked in and helped Mary clean the place up and Sharon did the laundry. Derek said that Damon could sleep there, but he'd better take his meals with us.

o

A few days later, Ron showed up in his pickup, loaded all of our propane bottles and left, returning some time later with them refilled. Between keeping the diesel vehicles topped off and exercising the generator, I was always on the lookout for more fuel. Somehow, Derek got a M1114 Hummer assigned to him and he started bringing 500 gallon trailers, usually filled with JP-8 but sometimes carrying diesel. I finally got a look at his orders and they had been signed by the Governor of Arkansas. His duties were liaison and fact finding with the California National Guard. Don't ask me, it made no sense at all.

The downside was that Elizabeth expected her grandpa to shower, shave and be in clean clothes every day. I even used Stetson aftershave, a holdover from a previous time. I got Patti to give me a buzz cut. I avoided wearing my single action firearms, they generated too many snickers.

It just hadn't been a good time; the next thing that happened was the battery gave out in my wheelchair. Chris pulled the battery and I gave it to Damon, suggesting several places he could find a replacement. Sometimes I worry about that boy, he showed up with 2 replacement wheelchairs and 4 replacement batteries.

"Dad, those two friends of yours, Ron and Clarence, looked like they could use an assist. While I was at that medical equipment place, I found a few things I thought you might be able to use."

"Like what?"

"A 10 liter oxygen machine, several portable bottles and regulators and some of those Phillips Heart Start defibrillators. They had more stuff, did I miss anything?"

"I don't suppose you got more ringer's, normal saline, D5W or IV sets, did you?"

"You need some?"

"That and some QuikClot ACS bandages."

"What's that?"

"Gauze pads that stop bleeding if you get shot."

"Anything else?"

"I made up a list of our medications; you might try to see if you can find any."

"That it?"

"It's a good start. Morphine sulfate, syringes, needles and a few other things could come in handy. Cipro and Keflex would be a good start."

"Any idea where to look?"

"The Yellow pages, under medical supply houses."

Damon borrowed my borrowed pickup and off he went. He didn't say where he was going, my bet would be LA. Survivors were still coming out, although it had tapered off quite considerably. There were ways to get a pickup into the city, if you knew all the truckers' routes. Unlike how I written about in so many stories, we hadn't done a lot of strategic reallocation. I didn't say we hadn't done any, just very little. There were a few things we couldn't grow in a garden, toilet paper and cigarettes are just two examples. Ron was on the lookout for more smokes and I had the occasion to locate more tp.

Damon returned a day later, the pickup was filled to overflowing. All of the important stuff was buried under two layers of Charmin. He had 6 different antibiotics, all of the drugs that Sharon and I took, Ron and Linda took, and Clarence was now taking. His assortment of IV fluids included 250ml, 500ml and 1liter bags of the three I mentioned and some I didn't. He had boxes of simple medical instruments, like hemostats and some of those chemical warfare kits that Derek must have told him about.

The pickup hadn't had sideboards when he left, but it did when he returned. It also had a set of license plates that he said came off a nearly identical pickup. I was happy to see 48 bottles of Humalin 70/30. It's fair to say that he'd made up for lost time, forget what I said earlier about strategic reallocation. He must have hit West Marine, he had PRI-G, PRI-D, motor oil and any number of things I hadn't thought of. I checked the dosimeter I'd given him to wear, 50R, not that bad. I knew from looking that he'd been to a Big Five Sporting Goods store – he had at least 2 dozen home defense style shotguns and some ammo; assorted sizes including 000, 00, #4 Buck and some slugs. There was more of the .38 Special, .357 magnum and .45ACP, but no .45 Colt.

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Moving ahead a bit, Derek had hooked up with Lance and they screened the new residents of Moon Shadows, phase 6, our tract. All in all, we could have done worse; most of the folks were from the Valley, Grenada Hills, Northridge and the like. Except for that houseful of illegals, we had mostly middle class and upper middle class people. Some were right leaning, many left leaning and two families were Libertarian, whatever that is. At that point in time, we distributed weapons, mostly shotguns, and beefed up the tract's security force.

I think that they must have written off Los Angeles, the Army Corps of Engineers was working to restore power as a whole to the Antelope Valley. Natural gas came first, requiring Dick to un-convert the gas appliances in the tract, except for our stove on the back patio. We never lost water although we lost water pressure for brief periods. Finally, about 7 months after the day the country ended, they turned the lights back on. Finally, finally, military medics came from tract to tract, giving us the new flu vaccine.

Even though we had electricity, we still didn't have telephone service and Time-Warner cable wasn't back on the air. Translation: no internet. However, Clarence was getting back to his former self and Ron and I hadn't changed, much. If I were to describe our personalities in a single word, Clarence would be grateful, Ron would be aggressive and I suppose I'd be chicken-chit. That probably explains why I'd been a tax auditor for about 20 years. A 3 word definition of yours truly would be picky, picky, picky.

o

"Fellas, the rule is: bad things happen in 3s."

"Bull, Gar-Bear, we've had enough."

"Gar-ree don't say that, I ain't seen nothing in the sky."

"Does anyone remember Ocotillo Wells?"

"Name sounds familiar, but I don't."

"Gar-ree, wasn't that the place they had the earthquake back in 2007?"

"Bingo. That Limey who was involved in building our shed back in '87 told me that earthquakes start on both ends and work their way to the middle. We're overdue for the Big One, or haven't you heard?"

"Bull, they've been saying that for 30 years. We've had Sylmar and Northridge and they were both right in the middle."

"Neither one of them was on the San Andreas Fault. I don't think they count."

"Is that shelter in your backyard strong enough to withstand a 10.5?"

"10.5? Oh, the movie. I think a 10.5 is theoretically impossible, something on the order of 8.5 to 9.5 would constitute *The Big One*."

"Well, it can wait 15 years and then happen. We'll all have died of old age by then and we won't care."

"Listen, it's not like before. We don't have the internet so we can't go out and check the earthquake maps. Unless a person actually feels a quake, there no way we'd know about it. KTFPI doesn't seem to carry much state and national news; they're focused on local news, like all the trouble in the refugee camps."

"Who is guarding those camps now?"

"The State Military Reserve, they pulled out the National Guard to help in other places."

"I thought those camps were supposed to be temporary."

"They were, Ronald. Problem is that the Valley got hit with 2 nukes, hell they hit all the airports except Palmdale."

"Do we know who they were?"

"Only two countries had that many weapons, Clarence, the United States and Russia. I don't think we sent missiles against ourselves, so that leaves Russia."

"What about the Middle East?"

"What about the Middle East? No one knows. If they do know, they aren't telling. When was the last time we heard anything directly from the White House? Is there even a White House left in Washington? I know that if I was in charge of picking US targets, Washington DC would be at the top of my list."

"Besides, you said the Prez bugged out while you were watching Fox News."

"I did? Jeez, I can't remember. Who is running the country? We're supposed to have Presidential Elections in November, what month is it?"

"October."

"What about the elections?"

"Postponed indefinitely."

"How do you know that?"

"It was on KTPI, of course."

"Wait, you said October, what about our garden?"

"It did fine and Sharon, Amy, Lorrie and Mary canned everything."

"Who called this meeting?"

"You did, Gar-Bear, you said you wanted to talk to both of us."

"I must be having a Senior Moment, I don't recall that."

"It's been very tough this past summer, maybe your mind blocked it out. What is the last thing you recall?"

"Damon borrowed my pickup and took off with a shopping list."

"Do you remember him coming back?"

"Vaguely, was the pickup filled to overflowing?"

"It was. He got everything you said you wanted and more. What do you remember after that?"

"After what?"

o

They began to suggest Alzheimer's and I didn't believe that was the case. My mind had simply blocked out a large space of time, probably related to something bad happening and I didn't want to remember. Ron and Clarence left, shaking their heads. I decided that I stunk and needed a shower. I got clean clothes, locked myself in the bathroom and began to undress. I pulled off my T-shirt and noticed one hell of a scar on my left shoulder.

"Sharon, what's this?"

"That's the scar from where you got shot."

"I got shot? When was that?"

"Just after Damon got back from Los Angeles. You were pulling night duty guarding the fence at the end of Moonraker Road. Some men tried to climb the fence and you tried to stop them. You were shot in the left shoulder. We called for help on channel 9. Derek started an IV with Ringer's and applied QuikClot bandages. You were transported to AV Hospital and underwent surgery. You've been in a stupor ever since. The doctor said you might not remember getting shot. He didn't say you'd be in a stupor for several months, however. Are you back? Really back? They said you might suffer PTSD."

"I guess I did. What's the scar on my back like?"

"Pretty bad. You were shot with an AK using that 7.62x39mm ammo. The bullet hit your left shoulder blade and shattered the shoulder blade. The doctor said it was soft point hunting ammo."

"They didn't get my M1A, I hope?"

"All they got was dead. It seems that you are one heck of a good shot. The third guy did some spray and pray, he didn't know where you were because of your improved flash-hider."

"I don't remember, Sharon. None of it."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 11

I went ahead and took my shower, got dressed and went for a cup of coffee. I was missing from somewhere in June through sometime in October. It was as if my brain had an on and off switch on the recorder where life's events are recorded. The closest I could come to describing it was that it was like what your brain did when you got very drunk and the recorder shut down. All I could do was try and pickup from here and move on, letting people fill me in.

"Ron, Gary. I'm sorry partner, I'm back without whatever happened between when I got shot and earlier today when Sharon told me I got shot."

"I wondered, you acted like you were drunk but you hadn't been drinking, I checked. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?"

"Could be, I have no idea. When you have time, could you and Clarence come over and fill me in?"

"I suppose we could, are you sure you want to know?"

"I only need to know if I owe amends to anyone."

"As far as I know, you don't. Ask Sharon, she was there all of the time, we weren't. Now listen, you've been through this amends business before, back in 1999. You know damned well that there are some amends you can't make. Just get out and talk to the members of your MAG, explain what happened and they'll tell you anything you should be concerned about."

I started a little closer to home because my family was the people I spent the most time with. No explanations were necessary there; they understood and were happy I was back, as Damon put it. I allocated time to talk to Lance, Dave, Dick and Chris individually. My canned speech basically said, "I'm sorry, but I've been out of it. If I owe you an apology for anything, please accept it now." Apparently the only apology I owed was for not participating, but everyone understood, or said they did. All were happy that I knew my name again.

After I'd taken care of that, I started with my armory to see what condition my weapons were in and if I was missing any large quantity of ammo. Derek had taken care of my weapons, cleaning them and locking them up where I couldn't get to them. The inventory of ammo was a bit larger than I remembered. I'd lost weight and I had to wear the Laredoan in the last hole in the gun belt. That was darned strange; I thought I bought the crossdraw rig. In one sense, I had, but it was the double holster rig with an added crossdraw holster. Even in the last notch, it slid off my hips.

Well, that was ok; I had a pair of PT1911s, one in a model 1942 tanker shoulder holster and the second in a model 1911 swiveling Pershing model. I must have turned cheap, I

had canvas magazine pouches. Once I was semi-satisfied that my firearms and ammo were in order, my next order of business was comparing the actual food supply with the inventory on my computer.

To do that, I started by printing the inventory on the computer and added a few blank sheets of paper, just in case. I spent a whole day in the shelter, I'm surprised I even remember we had a shelter. The following day, I inventoried the garage and finally the kitchen. I had to add more blank paper to allow for the home canned items. We had gotten commodities before I lost my memory or I'd had to add those too. It was bad enough as it was, the commodities changed month to month and I was missing 5 months of additions and subtractions.

Once I had the ammo and food done, I was down to inventorying the fuel. I stuck the diesel tank and learned it was about 80% empty. Then I uncovered the drums and started tapping them to figure out how many were full and how many empty. At least 'they' had started at one end and were working towards the other, I had 14 full drums, one partial and 9 empty. It took most of a day to update the computer inventory.

"You've been busy."

"I take it nobody updated the inventory."

"We didn't have time. Between gardening, canning, and keeping an eye on you, that was the last thing on our minds."

"Did anyone give any thought to replacing the fuel you've used up?"

"Sure we did."

"The propane tank is full."

"That's because after we got natural gas back, Ron topped it off and Dick converted the furnace, hot water heater, dryer and kitchen stove back to natural gas."

"Near as I can tell, there's only about 800 gallons of diesel."

"It could have been full, but you told Derek to take his JP-8 and shove it."

"I did?"

"You did."

"Damn. You do know that you can mix biodiesel and JP-8 to produce an acceptable substitute for #2 diesel, don't you?"

"How would I know that? You're the family expert on all kinds of fuels."

"The only problem with JP-8 is that it doesn't lubricate like diesel fuel does. If you mix JP-8 with biodiesel, you can offset that."

"Don't tell me, talk to Derek. You'd better apologize to him over the JP-8 if you expect him to get you any."

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"I understand I owe you an apology."

"What for?"

"Telling you that I didn't want JP-8. If we could get some biodiesel, it would offset the lack of lubricating properties missing from the JP-8."

"Yeah, I know."

"If you knew, why didn't you ignore me, I was out of my head and you could have snuck that one past me."

"How much do you need?"

"Near as I can tell, 4,200 gallons. The tank is about 80% empty and holds 5,000 gallons when it's full."

"What I was offering was B25, 25% biodiesel and 75% JP-8. When you heard me say JP-8, you never let me finish."

"Derek, I'm oh so sorry. I've been out of it since I got shot. I suppose the opportunity has long since past?"

"Yes and no. I went ahead and took the fuel and have been storing it until you got back to normal. I have a tanker with 2,000 gallons of biodiesel and 6,000 gallons of JP-8. So you want it now, or should I wait until you're totally back to normal?"

"Did you add PRI-D?"

"I wasn't sure we needed it but I went ahead and added 4 gallons of PRI-D."

"It doesn't seem that many years back that I was changing your diapers and now you're changing mine. After I'd talked about PRI-D and PRI-G in my stories, someone contacted the manufacturer and the product only has a shelf life of 3 years. He didn't explain what he meant, that could be the shelf life of the pure product or the shelf life of the fuel after the product is added. I need 10 drums of gas, too."

"And you can't remember anything from the time you were shot until you got ready to take that shower?"

"Exactly. It's almost like I was in a blackout for 5 months."

"Can you move your arm yet?"

"About this high," I said raising my arm, "Why?"

"One of the nerves was cut by the bullet. The doctor said he didn't know if you'd ever regain use of your arm."

"I can only raise it shoulder high, but it was that way long before I took that bullet. I have a little Osteoarthritis in my left shoulder and have since about 2004. Who made sure I took my pills and got my insulin?"

"You did. You wouldn't let anyone near your medicine and you insisted on monitoring it yourself. You were on autopilot, if that makes any sense."

"I've lost some weight, can you explain that?"

"After you got home from the hospital and were able to care for yourself, you said something about not liking being fat and put yourself on a very rigid diet. You used the diabetic cookbook and limited yourself to 1,000 calories. You'd sit for hours in your wheelchair and stare at your computer monitor, claiming you were counting the stars."

"I use the Starfield screensaver, is that what you mean?"

"I guess."

"It is set at the slowest setting and at 50 stars. What else did I do?"

"Eat, sleep, use the bathroom and plan each day's meals. Of course you were in the hospital 2 weeks and not able to do anything when you got home. That lasted about 2 weeks. I cleaned your weapons and locked them up with a different padlock. Did you have a key?"

"I had 8 padlocks all using the same key; you must have used one of them."

"I'll get the fuel and we'll put the tanker back where I have it stored. I'm not sure about the gas."

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In the category of not that it matters anymore:

The UN health agency says the world lacks the manufacturing capacity to meet potential demand for a human bird flu vaccine.

The statement, made Friday from World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva, came as the World Health Organization announced progress in developing a vaccine for human cases of bird flu, known as H5N1.

"For the first time, results presented at the meeting have convincingly demonstrated that vaccination with newly developed avian influenza vaccines can bring about a potentially protective immune response against strains of H5N1 virus found in a variety of geographical locations," WHO said.

The statement came after two days of meetings, which were attended by more than 100 influenza vaccine experts, from academia, national and regional public health institutions, the pharmaceutical industry and regulatory bodies throughout the world.

"Some of the vaccines work with low doses of antigen, which means that significantly more vaccine doses can be available in case of a pandemic," the statement said.

But, it warned that in spite of the encouraging progress, "the world still lacks the manufacturing capacity to meet potential global pandemic influenza vaccine demand as current capacity is estimated at less than 400 million doses per year of trivalent seasonal influenza vaccine."

To counter this challenge, WHO has launched a \$10-billion action plan to increase vaccine supply over a decade, including the transfer of technology to developing countries so they can set up their own influenza vaccine production units.

They were several tens of millions of lives too late.

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It soon began to overwhelm me and I backed off to let life happen. How does a person reconstruct 5 months they can't remember? If it was anything like an alcoholic blackout, being reminded just a little at a time sometimes worked and just as often didn't. I went back to Lance and told him I didn't think I'd be much good to him for a while. He told me he'd long since taken me off the schedule and not to worry about it.

"Who took my place?"

"Your grandson."

"My grandson is about 5 years old, he's not even big enough to pick up a gun."

"Not Derek's son, Damon's son, Aaron."

"But when did they get here? If I recall correctly, it was Derek, Damon, Mary, DJ, Elizabeth, Joshua and Tommy."

"Damon's kids got into a fight with their mother, grabbed a vehicle and drove all the way from someplace called Mason City to Palmdale. Do you know where Mason City is?"

"Well yeah, maybe 30 miles east of Britt where they lived. That has to be close to 1,800 miles from here. Who drove? I think only Britney has a driver's license."

"She and Aaron drove. They were fairly well supplied with guns, ammo, food and water. They also had a portable pump that ran off the car battery to pump gas and refill the tank. Aaron told me it took them nearly 3 weeks to get here."

"When was that?"

"While you were in the hospital. Are you sure you're ok now?"

"I've lost weight, I've lost 5 months of my life and I had no idea that Damon's kids had shown up. I had a talk with Derek and he filled me in a little. He has a JP-8/biodiesel blend he's going to use to refill my fuel tank."

"I could use some, is there enough?"

"He said he had 8,000-gallons, I don't see why not. I'd better go home now, Lance. I think I've had enough excitement for one day."

"Sharon, Lance said that Damon's kids were here, where are they staying?"

"I thought you knew. Well, when Lance and Derek went through the tract, checking people out, they found another group of illegals. They called the Sheriff, the people were removed and we cleaned up that house for Damon."

"Which house?"

"The one where Dan and Dawn lived."

Derek and Mary were in the house immediately to our west and Damon and his kids were in the house immediately to our east. I guess it's true; God helps those that can't help themselves. Both homes were identical mirror images of each other. They were 2 story homes, both with small patios and Dan and Dawn had left their aboveground pool. I didn't see how this could last, soon enough the boys would want to or need to go home. I better enjoy it while it lasted. I was tired to the bone, my feet hurt and I felt like I needed a nap. I went to my bedroom, undressed and crawled in between the sheets. The next thing I knew, Sharon was telling me it was time to get up.

"What time is it?"

"Around nine."

"I missed supper?"

"Nine am, not nine pm, you slept for about 17 hours."

"If that's the case, why am I still tired?"

"You've been sleeping a lot lately. Get cleaned up and dressed and I'll fix you some waffles."

"But you never fix breakfast."

"Believe me, it will be a pleasure, you haven't eaten waffles in 5 months."

"But I like waffles."

"You didn't. I'll wait until you're ready to eat and prepare the mix."

I showered, shaved and dressed. When I walked in the kitchen, she asked if I was ready for waffles. I assured her I could probably eat 3 and she added the liquid to the mix. I downed 3 waffles, a large glass of orange juice and refilled my coffee. My belly hurt; apparently I hadn't been eating that much for breakfast in some time. Patti had given her (us) a Belgian waffle iron for Christmas of 2006. She figured out a recipe that used regular pancake mix and made perfect waffles. Lathered in melted butter and drowned in Aunt Jemima syrup, they were delicious.

Without thinking I went to the office, found a new pack of Kool's and lit a cigarette, promptly choking. Sharon walked into the office and asked if I was ok.

"I'm fine, but this cigarette must be stale, it practically choked me."

"You haven't smoked since the shooting."

"I haven't?"

"You haven't. You said you'd never quit smoking and when you didn't light up when you got home from the hospital, I kept my mouth shut. In case you're wondering, Ron got you a full case of cigarettes."

"Sixty cartons?"

"In addition to the one's you already had. I sealed them in plastic with an oxygen absorber, just in case."

She had to be telling the truth, the cigarette made me cough badly and I got really light headed. The second didn't and I was off and running. Over a period of time, I started to remember, I could get up to the point where I remember shooting the first 2 of the 3 men climbing the fence. They were carrying long guns, rifles or shotguns. I could remember getting the third one in my sights and pulling the trigger and then nothing. We must have fired at the same time, I was aiming, and he couldn't see me. He must have gotten lucky or I got unlucky, same difference.

"Ronald, you there?"

"Gar-Bear?"

"I got my head screwed on straighter than before. Man, what a nightmare, I just lost 5 months of my life."

"Are you sure? Let me ask you one last time, are you sure you don't want the 2 cases of Kool's kings?"

"Two cases? Sure I'll take them. I've been piecing it together. I guess I've been off my feed, just a little."

"Just a lot, you mean. If you're sure you're up to it, I'll pick up Clarence and we'll be over."

"Ok. The two of you can fill me in on some more of my strange behavior. I've been trying to remember what happened, but I can't remember getting shot. Sharon said something about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Anyway, I'm back, for better or worse."

"Give us 30 minutes."

"Should I meet you at the roadblock?"

"Man, you're still out of touch. Check it out."

I got my rifle and the M1911 in the shoulder holster and walked up to the entrance of the tract.

"Help you?"

"What happened to the roadblock? Who are you?"

"We pulled the roadblock about 3 months back. I'm one of the new residents, John Jacobs. Who are you?"

"Gary Ott. 4560 Moonraker."

"You the guy who got shot?"

"Unfortunately."

"Lance said it was ok to let you pass from now on. You get your memory back?"

"Some of it. I'm still trying to get back up to speed. Two friends of mine will be coming through, I thought I'd better let you know."

"Ron and Clarence? They're regulars. Word is that you're lucky to be alive."

"You don't say."

"You damn near bled to death the way I hear it. If that boy of yours hadn't been a Combat Lifesaver, more than likely, you'd have died. Your daughter being a Sheriff's dispatcher didn't hurt either. You knew that it was ruled a justifiable homicide, right?"

"No, I hadn't heard. Thanks John, I'd better get home."

"Take it easy."

"*The Eagles*, I don't remember when."

"Huh?"

"Never mind."

We had a guard, sitting in a lawn chair who only had a handgun. That was far different from the security we'd maintained during the spring. This guy was wearing a private security guard badge.

"Gary, got a minute?"

"Hi Lance, sure."

"You have any California legal magazines for your rifle?"

"I have the one it came with, why?"

"The Sheriff has been enforcing the California magazine law. They're still a little loose on carrying loaded weapons inside the city limits, but they'll confiscate any illegal magazines."

"Anything else I should know?"

"Just that. In light of my having been a security chief for one of the firms at Plant 42, I was able to work with the Sheriff and arranged for our own private security force. It's made up of residents who have the proper guard training for armed guards."

"What else has changed?"

"Los Angeles was pretty much a complete loss. That means that 85% of our working force in the area is out of jobs. The government stepped in and is supplying some of our food. For the time being, utilities are free and mortgage holders can't enforce payments. They've really cracked down on looting, shoot on sight orders are in place."

"Has there been much trouble?"

"Not since the report of your shooting was all over the radio."

"No one told me about that."

"You had minor celebrity status until someone else did the same thing. The DA refused to prosecute, ruling your act justifiable. Those guys were responsible for several home invasions, plus they were armed to the teeth. By the way, I have your improved flash hider. I pulled it off your rifle before the Sheriff showed up. It was before they were enforcing the magazine law. I'll bring your suppressor over later."

"Thanks."

"Sharon, what is the deal on our mortgage?"

"We don't have one."

"Sure we do."

"No, we don't. The company hadn't filed a lien and it was destroyed in the bombing. I applied for a clear title. I had the house put in my name only, I hope you don't mind."

"I couldn't care less. Is there coffee? Ron and Clarence are coming over."

"I'll make a second pot. Is Maxwell House or Hills Bros ok?"

The Bird Flu – Chapter 12

"Sure, as long as it's not Columbian."

"We don't have any Yuban."

"Heck, I can remember when I didn't like Folgers."

Just remember, bad things happen in 3s and my getting shot didn't count. We got through the pandemic far better than I thought we would; only Ron and Clarence got the bird flu and Tamiflu worked for them. Then, I got that wild hair up my butt and re-financed the house, getting money to build a large underground shelter about the size of our backyard. I had notes that covered events right up to the day before I got shot. I was getting back up to speed faster than I thought I would, however, those five months were a total blank.

The real problem with the pandemic had been the lack of hospital beds. I know I've mentioned that before, but the situation had been getting worse, not better. We lost one hospital in the Antelope Valley and the hospital I used in LA had closed, Grenada Hills. Hospitals had only been able to take the most critically ill people and they soon ran out of beds. It was a miracle they got the vaccine as fast as they did.

Even before we were out of the frying pan, we were tossed into the fire by that stupid war. I say stupid because it might not have happened if we hadn't been so busy exporting Democracy. The mind set of many countries precluded them ever becoming Democracies. Even had both of my eyes been put out, I could have seen this war coming. Dubya might have been Vladimir's pal, but that didn't prevent the buildup of Russian forces. They had done some of it secretly, of course, but in early 2007, long before the pandemic, they began positioning themselves over those missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland. You can't claim you weren't warned.

Sharon and I had more than one fight over my insisting we get prepared. I thought I had her converted, but it wasn't so. She just didn't want to need groceries and not have any money. Whatever her reasons, they worked for me and I'd make those suggestions. It wasn't near the shock it could have been when the Prez got on TV and said we had the mutated bird flu.

Then I had that dream...

◦

"You look better."

"I think I look the same."

"You seem more alert."

"Did I do anything I should apologize for?"

"The list is long, but distinguished."

"*Top Gun*. I only lost those 5 months, not my entire memory."

"I've been watching, Gar-ree, but I ain't seen no rock."

"Yeah, what's your crystal ball say is going to happen next?"

"Just once, I'd like to be wrong. We've had enough already. A global pandemic followed by a global thermonuclear war? Pick something, I fresh out of ideas. It could be Yellowstone or Long Valley. On the other hand, it could be something as local as the Big One."

"We're going to be 20-30 years just getting over the war."

"If we ever do, you mean. Lance said that LA was gone and 85% of the working force in the area was out of a job. Now mind you, I have a theory, but that's all it is, a theory. I'm not going to embarrass myself by saying what I think will happen next. Did you remember to bring my cigarettes?"

"They're in the pickup."

"Thank you."

"How much weight did you lose?"

"I haven't gotten on a scale, maybe 30-40 pounds. I lost more than 2" off my waist, I tried to strap on my guns and they slid off."

"Did anyone tell you about the magazine law?"

"Lance mentioned it. I have 2 of the 10-round magazines, one for each rifle."

"You made one shot kills on all three of those guys."

"Fat lot of good that did me. I'm told that Derek saved my life."

"I guess he did. He slapped on the bandages and got the IV going way before the Paramedics showed up, or so I've been told."

"I have almost zero clotting factor because of the aspirin. Enough of that; Clarence, how are you doing?"

"Gar-ree, I've been taking the meds and I'm back to normal or as near normal as I'll ever be."

"I was told that my grandchildren showed up. But I haven't seen them yet."

"Damon and Aaron went fishing."

"Fishing?"

"Salvaging."

"Lance said they were shooting looters on sight."

"Up here, yeah. Not down in LA."

"What are they looking for?"

"Luxury items like guns, ammo, food, medicine and cigarettes."

"Since when has food been a luxury item?"

"Been that way for quite some time, partner. They've been doing grocery warehouses and getting the leavings. Most of those places had already been looted, but they left behind a few things."

"Like what?"

"Bulk bags of beans or rice, disposable diapers, some canned goods. Things we'd never consider getting like shotgun shells for hunting and about every caliber of ammo you'd ever want. He's been very enterprising."

"I inventoried the food; there were a lot of changes I couldn't account for. I understood the canned goods, but some things didn't make much sense."

"You don't know the half of it; he has 2 rooms filled with trade goods."

"Derek is topping off my fuel tank and Lance's while he's at it."

"I'll have to fill my cans; I need diesel for that pickup."

"Are we in good shape overall?"

"Better than most. Damon is keeping us ahead of the curve. About one more disaster though and it will remain to be seen."

"Clarence, how far from the San Andreas are you?"

"Less than 2 miles, why?"

"Let me tell you my theory. Remember, it's just that, a theory. We had major nuclear strikes north and south of us right?"

"Right."

"That did nothing to relieve the stress on the San Andreas. If I had to bet on the next disaster, my money would be on a large earthquake. I think the last major quake on this area of the Fault was the Ft. Tejon Quake in 1857."

"You're talking about the Big One?"

"That's all I've heard since we moved back to California in '82. We had the Sylmar Quake, the Whittier Narrows Quake and the Northridge Quake, none of which were on the San Andreas. We're overdue."

"Could be, but I hope you're wrong."

"You'd rather have Long Valley blow up or some of the Cascadian volcanoes erupt?"

"I rather nothing happened."

"Me too, especially with me only being 2 miles from the Fault."

"Gary, it would break our backs. We've had 2 national disasters and if you heap a regional disaster on top of that, we may never recover. I suppose I'd better call my buddy at AmeriGas and order a third tank."

"Can you get one?"

"I can get a third tank. I don't know if I can get another 500 gallons of propane. You knew that Clarence finally got a generator, didn't you?"

"When did that happen? Nobody ever tells me anything."

"We told you, you just don't remember. He went with a RS12000 and 1,000 gallons of propane. Dick gave him jets to convert over if anything happens."

"Do you know where I can get any gas?"

"Have your tried eating beans?"

"Not that kind, gasoline. I need about 10 drums."

"Gee, I don't know. You'd better ask Damon. If anyone can get it, he can. Do you have enough PRI-G?"

"Oh, you bet I do, some kind soul put 2 gallons each of PRI-G and 4 gallons of PRI-D on the shelf in the garage. I found it when I inventoried."

"That must have been Damon; he's spent a lot of time in LA."

"There was more, Derek put PRI-D in the JP-8 biodiesel mix."

"Did it need it?"

"Don't know, don't care, better to use it and not need it than need it and not use it. Those folks at Power Research say that it doesn't hurt to use too much, it just wastes money. At \$85 a gallon, I tend to agree with them. They also say, with one simple treatment about every 18-to-24 months, PRI will keep your fuel fresh in storage for 2-to-10 years, depending on initial fuel quality and storage conditions. It's recommended by Generac, but I wouldn't rely on that, their generators won't last as long as the fuel."

"Partner, I think those are advertising claims. You're not going to know until you have actual experience with the products."

"That's right, but you have to try."

"We'd better be going. You seem to be ok and if you're right about the earthquake, we need more fuel."

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I only suggested that we were overdue for the Big One. We had been overdue for 25 years and it could be another 100 before it happened. I did believe in the rule of 3s. At my age, I'd seen it happen more than once. My Dad died and ~45 days later my step-mother died. In between, I lost an aunt on my mother's side. In another episode, some of the seniors started to die and it didn't stop until 9 were gone in a space of less than 9 months. My generator was back in the garage, Dave must have returned it and I forgot or he did it when I was in the blackout.

According to Drs. Kate Hutton and Lucy Jones, there was no system that could predict earthquakes. I read something that suggested someone had come up with a new system, but couldn't remember the details. All of which assumed you had a reliable system to disseminate the information in the first place. It was one of many possibilities, my crystal ball had been wrong before.

On any given day, the possibility of a major natural disaster is on the order of 1 in 20,000. We'd known about the bird flu for years and it still caught us short. We've been worried about a nuclear war since Russia first exploded a nuclear weapon in 1949. The

first hydrogen bomb was detonated 1952 followed by the Russians less than a year later. The Cold War ended in 1991 and reemerged in 2006. My crystal ball got that one right.

On the subject of natural disasters the spring brings flooding, the summer brings tornadoes, hurricanes and forest fires. Not so much happens in the fall, but then comes winter with blizzards and ice storms. Disasters like volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis don't use the same calendar, they happen anytime. Some places, like California, have it backwards; the floods occur in the winter, encouraged, no doubt, by the forest fires. If you're prepared, it doesn't matter, if you're not, the only thing you have left is prayer.

Next, you're left to wonder, will my shelter survive a hazard like an earthquake? It probably won't survive a direct hit by a nuclear weapon, no matter how sturdy. Not even Cheyenne Mountain will. Interestingly, the Russians probably know where all the secret shelters are, it's the American public who is in the dark.

Think about what it takes to clean up a country after a nuclear war. First, you have to wait for the radiation to die off, some of that will take years. You can start on the edges and work your way in to ground zero. Say 10-15 years for the cleanup and another 10-15 years to rebuild, one generation. That's a whole lot of beans and rice. It took about 5 years, more or less, to rebuild Hiroshima and Nagasaki and those were little bombs by today's standards. Two ~20kt bombs, bought a country to its knees and ended WW II. What if it was 1,000 bombs/warheads ranging in size from 150kt to 3mt? And there's that thing they call MAD. You don't hear it so much these days, but that's still the policy.

Greater Los Angeles had a population of 10s of millions; a 2005 estimate said 13 million. Those that survived had to go somewhere, but did they all have to come here? I was asleep during most of the initial trouble; dissatisfaction arose in the emergency camps, tent cities really, early. Some people didn't like the food, wanted more water and found the accommodations unsatisfactory. Before the war, the population of the Antelope Valley was less than a half million, after, a million and half perhaps two.

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That's why I was so surprised when I learned we'd let our guard down. Ron had said 500,000 and rising, but it got oh so much worse. As the pandemic wound down, fewer people got sick, end of story. After the war, we had over a million displaced people; the trouble could only get worse. I wasn't up to speed yet, and as a result, was less assertive, my bad.

"Damon, I need gasoline."

"How much?"

"On the order of 10 drums, 550-gallons, plus whatever it will take to fill the gas cans."

"Six hundred gallons do it?"

"It might, why do you know where to get gas?"

"No, but I needed a goal. If I found it, how would I haul it? 10 drums of gas must weigh a lot."

"About 3,500 pounds."

"That's 3 trips in your pickup, assuming I could find some gas."

"I'd settle for a tanker with say, 8,000 gallons. I can add PRI-G and restore the gas for at least 18-24 months. Longer, if you can get us more PRI-G."

"I can get all the PRI products you need. They had a bunch at the Marina. I've never seen any tankers on the highway."

"How many service stations are there in a place as large as Los Angeles? Someone had to be making a delivery. You could try Bakersfield, there's a major distributor there."

"I don't want to go there; the people who didn't come up 14 went up 5."

"I understand that you've been scavenging."

"A little here, a little there, it adds up. What do you need, I probably have it?"

"10 drums of gas."

"Ouch. Well, ok, Aaron and I will look."

How many tankers are there in a city as large as Los Angeles? Probably a lot, there are a lot of service stations, usually 3 on every corner, sometimes 4. The only thing they have more of than service stations is liquor stores. Hell, all of the grocery stores in California sell liquor, except from 2am until 6am. I'd settle for one tanker with a half load of 87 octane and a half load of diesel. I could wear my generators out with that much fuel. Ron frequently says, "Be careful what you wish for, God has a sense of humor."

The next afternoon an Exxon Mobile tanker pulled up in front of the house. Half and half, just like I wanted. They had been to the Marina (Del Rey) and had added the PRI-G and PRI-D. Plus, they had more, the better part of a pickup load of fuel additives.

"I figured I'd mix in the PRI junk and let it slosh around on the way home. Who knows, maybe it's mixed in by now."

"At \$85 a gallon, it's not junk. At the moment, we're full up on diesel; Derek filled the tanks with a mixture of JP-8 and biodiesel."

"Want me to take it back?"

"NO!!!"

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"Did you feel that?"

"Did I feel what?"

"Earthquake."

"I didn't feel it, but that doesn't mean nuttin, we have about 20 a day. Besides, we can't have an earthquake, Aaron isn't finished transferring the gas. I'll tell you though; I wouldn't mind an earthquake, it might mix the PRI products into the fuel."

"When you got well, you got every bit of the smartass back."

"Thank you."

About the only time I felt an earthquake was when they tossed me out of bed. Just because I thought that we were overdue for the Big One didn't mean it would happen any-time soon. I needed a break, it's not every day you get shot and then go into who knows what to call it, some kind of amnesia, no, amnesia was memory loss. I just wasn't there; I was counting the stars on my screen saver. I had to get mentally reorganized, what do they call that, a time out? No, that's what your mama does to you when you're naughty.

Not only did I get the smartass back, the paranoia returned. If I could have purchased another 25 M1A mags, I would have. The housing tract wasn't really even guarded unless the guy in the lawn chair counted for something. The five families were secure behind our fences, but what about the newcomers? They didn't own the homes; they resided in them rent free, a sure recipe for them not caring. Some did, or they were getting paid for being security people, I'd have to check on that. Meanwhile, the clock was ticking, moving towards disaster #3.

After a week or so stewing in my own juices, I went back and redid the inventory, this time counting what Damon and Aaron had stored in their home. Ron had been right; they had plenty of beans and rice. Stacked in one corner was a pile of shotguns, Mossberg and Remington, the 2 brands still carried by Big Five. The principal market for Big Five's guns has been in the home defense area, 9 shot 590s, 7 shot Remington's. I would have added Winchester if they still made them, the model 1300 Defender wasn't a bad gun. These days, they were getting hard to find.

Next I looked through their ammo supply. They had Remington, Federal and Winchester, mostly some variety of buckshot or slugs. Some was tactical and some was full re-

coil. I scrounged around until I found a case of 15 pellet Remington 00 buck. I decided to let them inventory the stuff and I'd add the list to my computer. At least he got one thing right; he had Charmin stacked to the ceiling. Well, that and quilted Northern. In my opinion, Scott paper products are mostly commercial stuff that you save for last use. Because I wasn't long on .45 Colt, I looked until I found a few boxes, something to tide me over.

The problem was I wasn't putting the weight back on very fast, poor appetite. If I wanted to wear the cowboy guns, I'd need suspenders. With all those bags of beans and rice, I checked for the other critical ingredients, onion flakes, diced tomatoes and chili powder. I could see he'd been to Costco, too. There were about 200 quarts of home canned tomato sauce in the shelter and more in the garage. Maybe she intended to make home-made tomato soup or some special recipe spaghetti sauce.

"Hi, Dad. What are you doing?"

"Checking out your salvage goods. I took a case of 15 pellet 00 and those boxes of .45 Colt. It looks to me like you like chili too."

"We all do, don't you?"

"I love properly made chili, but Sharon won't make it. Next time you cook it, invite me to dinner."

"Is something bothering you?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You seem a little fidgety."

"Ron and Clarence were over and we got to talking about the third disaster. About the only thing I could come up with was the Big One."

"How far are we from the Fault?"

"About 3½ miles. Clarence lives a lot closer, about 2 miles and Ron about 3 miles. I figure we're about 30 years overdue. It could be 30 more years before we have it, except for the fact that part of the Fault is locked. Got a minute, I have a few questions?"

"What do you need to know?"

"How long has it been since they cut back on security?"

"Two, three months, roughly when the last survivors made it here from LA."

"I understand that some of them went up I-5 to Frasier Park or Bakersfield."

"That's why I didn't want to go to Bakersfield, I told you that."

"I'm only hitting on about 7 cylinders, son, be patient. Are you about done with your LA trips?"

"I think so, they've started the cleanup. It would be more than a little risky to go there now. Why, is there something else you need?"

"Not that I know of."

"Let me carry the ammo for you, anything else?"

"You might slip a couple hundred pounds of beans and rice in the shelter along with the makings for chili."

"Do you have enough ground beef?"

"We did; now, I have no idea. Sharon doesn't much care for ground beef and I'll bet we're getting low on chicken, pork steak, pork chops and Rice a Roni. Who does your cooking?"

"Brit and I switch off, but I think I'm the better cook."

"Sez you."

"Brit, you can barely boil water."

"Aaron and Eric like my cooking."

"I do too, sweetheart."